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DISCOURSES

ON

SEVERAL SUBJECTS.

BY

✓
WILLIAM WISHART, D. D.

Principal of the College of EDINBURGH.



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M D C C L I I I .

T O

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Lord BISHOP of

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Prelate of the most Noble Order of
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THE

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE publication of the first of these Discourses, I have given a sufficient account of in the Preface to it: for the revival of the rest, I shall only say; that, for some of them there has, long, been a demand; and all of them, I hope, may, by the Divine blessing, be of general use.

AN
ESSAY

ON THE

Indispensible NECESSITY of a
Holy and Good LIFE

TO THE

HAPPINESS of HEAVEN.

SHEWING,

That this Necessity, according to the
plain tenor of the Gospel, is with-
out *any* Reserve or Exception.

WITH

A PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT of the
Argument.

By WILLIAM WISHART, D.D.
Principal of the College of *Edinburgh*.

THE
P R E F A C E.

THE Chief Matter contained in the following Papers appears to me, after a long and deliberate consideration, to be the Truth of God, plainly declared in his Word: and all who agree with me in this, must also own, that it is Truth of the greatest Importance to the Souls of Men; and most necessary to be laid before *all* Sinners, for awakening them, and warning them to *flee from the wrath to come*; and before *all* good *Christians* for their satisfaction and encouragement, and for exciting them to their Duty: so that, this Publication stands in need of no Apology. I have, indeed, been long and strongly Prompted to it by my own Heart, as the best Service I could think it in my Power to do, for the Honour of God, and the great-

est good of my Fellow-creatures. And I thought I could not better employ the few leisure-hours I might have, at a time when some necessary affairs took me off, for a while, from my Ordinary station of usefulness in the Church, than by collecting into one view what I had delivered, on several Occasions, upon this important Argument: as several of the most attentive and judicious Hearers have expressed an earnest desire of having a more deliberate view of it.

As to the Stile of these papers: the only thing I have studied is, to *use all Plainness of speech*: and, if any where I have risen to a Warmth, or strength, of expression, it is rather that I have been led on to it by the Subject itself, than that I have studied it. I am sensible that the Stile, in many places, is loose, and full of words and repetitions: but this has often appeared to me necessary, in speaking to the bulk of mankind, and combating inveterate prejudices. I doubt not, a Critical Eye may find many faults and inequalities in the Stile, which I have not been
very

very anxious to prevent; many, which I have not been able either to discover or to help. But I wish these Papers to be read, rather with a serious Attention to the Matter of them, than with a Critical Attention to the Stile. If in *that* any candid and well-disposed person shall think I have fallen into any Mistake, especially in my main Argument; His friendly admonitions shall be thankfully received, and respectfully Answered; and I shall either acknowledge my mistake, when discovered to me, owning my Obligation to him for the discovery; or give the reasons why I am not Convinced of any: provided He sets his Name to his performance, as I have done mine, that I may know what Degree of respect is due to his Character in the World. But, if any nameless and careless Writer shall in the spirit of bitterness, or contempt, discover ill-nature, by way of shewing Wit; bring a *railing accusation* against me, instead of Argument; and impute to bad, or sinister designs, what I know to be written with the most honest purpose;
I believe

I believe the Impartial World will reckon, that neglect and forgiveness is the most proper treatment I can give to such an Adversary. Mean time, I earnestly recommend these Papers to a serious perusal; and to the Blessing of God, which alone can make them effectual for any good purpose.

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AN
ESSAY.

ON THE

Indispensible NECESSITY of a
Holy and Good LIFE

TO THE

HAPPINESS of HEAVEN.

OF all the snares whereby the *deceitfulness that is in sin* betrays sinners, and *hardens* them in a vicious course, there is none more dangerous than their *flattering* themselves they may go on securely in sin, in the hopes of *setting all to rights at last*, by a late or a death-bed repentance. There is hardly any snare in which so many sinners are caught, to their utter ruin. Few, if any, who have only the light of nature and moral conscience to guide them, as all mankind have, can be supposed absolutely insensible, that an obsti-

B

nate

nate vicious disposition is inconsistent with the true happiness of a reasonable creature: there are none who are favoured with the light of the Gospel, and have any regard to it, but may easily be sensible of the inconsistency of such a disposition with *that* happiness of the other world, which is there brought to light. Scarce any one, therefore, who professes Christianity, can be supposed so hardened in impiety as not to be apprehensive that he is unsafe in a vicious course; that his *present* state is bad and dangerous; that he must be ruined for ever, if he *always* continues in it: but wrong notions and presumptuous hopes of the mercy of God, vain apprehensions of the easiness of that repentance *at last*, the hardness of which makes him put it off *now*, concur with the sinner's love of his vicious lusts and evil ways, to make him flatter himself he may go on all his life in that beloved indulgence, and make himself easy in the hopes of retrieving all at last, by a late regrave and dying sorrow for an ill-spent life.

Nor are *they* only caught in this snare, who deliberately put off their repentance to the very *last*, and do not so much as *resolve* to set about it 'till then; but they also who (though they resolve to *begin* their repentance more early, so as to live religiously and virtuously for *some part* of their lives, yet) put it off from time to time, to a *more convenient*

nient season, as they think, when they hope to be in a better disposition, or more advantageous circumstances, for it; till by constantly delaying from one time to another, and yielding more and more by degrees to sloth, and thus letting their aversion to repentance, and their love to sin, grow upon them, they are thoughtlessly and inconsiderately drawn into the snare of putting off their repentance to the very last, though this was not their first intention. There is something vastly encroaching and ensnaring in this humour of delying and putting off, when once it seizes a man as to any thing; it insensibly gains ground by degrees; and what a man durst not adventure downright to neglect, or resolve to let alone, he is effectually drawn in to neglect by delaying it: as the sluggard saith, “ Yet a *little* sleep, a *little* “ slumber, a *little* folding of the hands to “ sleep;” not daring to speak it out even to himself at the first, that he will take a *great deal*; though in reality it comes to that, and he is drawn on by degrees to abandon himself to absolute sottishness and stupidity; so the slothful and secure sinner flatters himself he shall repent time enough, though he goes on but a little longer in a course of vicious indulgence; till by delaying and putting off from one time to another, the power and deceitfulness of sin growing upon him, he is unawares and effectually

drawn into the snare of putting off to the very last.

Seeing then this is so common and so dangerous a snare, such as men may be so easily led into without being aware of it; it is certainly a most charitable office, and the most proper business of ministers of Christ, which their love to the souls of men (if they have any) cannot fail to prompt them to, to warn men against this snare; and to dwell sometimes upon arguments of this nature.

This too is useful, not only for those who are in danger of being caught and held in this snare, but also for such as have happily escaped it. What a vast comfort must the consideration of this unspeakable danger give to those who have happily entered into a pious and virtuous course, and made some good progress in it? who can, on good grounds, reflect upon it, that their most important work is not yet to begin, but is happily advancing? how may they rejoice in their happy choice, and *bless the Lord who hath given them counsel*? In fine, *some things* which may be suggested upon this argument may be applied to shew, even to *them*, the necessity of not resting upon the beginnings of goodness, or any advances in it they have yet attained to, but constantly endeavouring after further improvements; and reaching forward to that perfection of holiness, which is the foundation of perfect happiness.

Now

Now to shew the unspeakable folly and danger of going on in a sinful course in the hopes of retrieving All at last by a late or a death-bed repentance, many strong and weighty considerations have been well illustrated and warmly enforced by wise and good men, by faithful ministers of Christ: such as these; the uncertainty of any man's having time and opportunity afterwards for that repentance which he now delays and puts off; the uncertainty of a sinner's being in a better disposition for repentance or finding it more easy afterwards; or rather, the certainty of his being in a worse disposition for it, and finding it more difficult, when his heart is further *hardened by the deceitfulness that is in sin*, and the force of vicious habits further strengthened by indulgence; and God more provoked to withdraw and withhold his grace, by a long and frequent resisting of his calls, and hardening the heart against his gracious invitations; so that the longer a sinner delays betaking himself to a better course, the more he is likely to defer it, and there is no end of delaying:

And as the common and natural issue of a sinner's delaying his repentance is putting it off to the very last; to shew the yet greater absurdity and danger of this, such further considerations as *these* have been urged with great force of argument and warmth of expostulation: that none of us knows but our

death may be sudden and surprising, or attended with such circumstances as to rob us of all opportunity, or capacity, for that repentance which we put off 'till then : that it is the greatest madness to put off a thing of the greatest importance, of absolute necessity, to a few moments of distress, hurry and confusion : how easily *then* may a man impose upon himself, by a false and unavailing repentance ; a mere regret for an ill-spent life, when under terrible apprehensions, or *a fearful looking for of judgment*, which is far from being true repentance, as not being attended with any *thorough change* to the better ; as the after-lives of those who, in the prospect of death, have felt very deep regret, and the most piercing sorrow, have too often and too plainly shewn ? how peculiarly hard is it *then* to attain to true repentance, and especially to carry it to any length of improvement, and to be sure of it ? so that, even supposing the dying sinner should reap the benefit of it in the other world, it is scarce possible he should reap the comfort of it in this : that there is a present pain and disquiet of mind in a vicious course, which the sinner can no way get rid of while he continues in it ; as there are present pleasures and satisfactions in a course of piety and virtue, which a man irrecoverably loses so long as he delays entering upon it, was he ever so sure of saving his soul at last.

Such

Such weighty considerations as these have already employed the discourses and pens of the best preachers and writers upon religious subjects; who appear to me to have so much exhausted the matter of these arguments, that scarce any thing remains to be said upon them: and, after so many excellent writers, I should scarce have thought of publishing any thing upon this subject, if something beyond *all* these considerations had not occurred to my mind in the study of the Holy Scriptures, with an evidence I could not get over, and a force of conviction I could not resist, *viz.* “ That the very possibility, or,
 “ at least, all hope of retrieving the misery
 “ of an ill-spent life, and escaping the
 “ wages of sin in another world, by a late
 “ or death-bed repentance, is absolutely ex-
 “ cluded by the nature and design of reli-
 “ gion, and by the strain of the plainest
 “ decisions of the Holy Scriptures, particu-
 “ larly of the New Testament; that the
 “ absolute necessity of a *holy life* to the hap-
 “ piness of heaven, without any reserve or
 “ exception, is *there* most plainly declared,
 “ in the strongest terms; that this is not the
 “ sound of a single text or two, but the
 “ strain and tenor of numbers of the plain-
 “ est passages of Holy Writ; and that there
 “ is no promise, nor instance, in the whole
 “ word of God, of that repentance being
 “ accepted of Him at last, or availing to
 “ obtain

“ obtain the happiness of the other world,
 “ which comes not till the last moment or
 “ hour of life ; far less, which is purposely
 “ deferred till then.”

This is a length, which I can observe none of the best writers on this argument to have gone : many of them have shewn a particular shyness about it : nay, most of them have directly contradicted it : and yet it is a length which the word of God plainly obliges me to go.

But, before I enter upon the illustration of this argument, may I not stop a little to bewail the madness of sinners in their vicious courses ; that, if they can allege but a bare possibility of indulging themselves in vice, and yet being saved at last, they will venture their All upon this possibility ; even though it be manifestly a thing so extraordinary, and out of the usual course of Divine conduct, as it may justly be reckoned *next to impossible* ! Who, in his right wits, would ever act so foolish a part, or run such a risk, in matters of infinitely less importance to him than the concerns of his soul and eternity ! And yet, so it is ; so we see it, in too many instances ; so far does mens love to their darling vices infatuate them, that they will thus trifle in matters of the last importance to them, *and sport themselves with their own deceivings* ; that, if they can flatter themselves with a meer possibility of retaining
 their

their vices to the last, and *then* saving their souls, upon this they will venture !

This, with other considerations, has made it appear of the greatest importance to me, that, if it can be done with truth and evidence, even this possibility, wherein they trust, should be taken from them ; that the desperate, obstinate sinner should be deprived of this only and most wretched refuge, upon which he is apt to go on securely in a vicious course.

But, when I represent it as a thing impossible, “ that a man should go on in a vicious course to the last, and *then* obtain the salvation of his soul,” I am far from intending to limit the almighty power of God, to whom *all things are possible*, which do not involve a *contradiction*, *i. e.* which are any real objects of power ; provided, too, they are not inconsistent with his moral character : but many things are in this sense possible, which are so contrary to all the well-known order of nature, or stated course of providence, that hardly any man would say concerning them, merely on account of *this* possibility, so much as that “ they *may be* ;” far less that “ they ever *will be*.” One plain instance may suffice, at present, for illustrating this : it is equally possible, equally easy for the Divine Power, that the sun should rise to-morrow in the West as in the East ; and yet, the man would appear very ridiculous who

who should say, “ *it may be* the sun shall
 “ rise in the West to-morrow.” Far less,
 if God, by whose power alone a thing can
 be brought about, declares *it shall never be*,
 is any man to entertain the thought that *it*
may be it shall come to pass, merely because
 it is conceiveable and consistent, a real ob-
 ject of power, and, with regard to the
 Divine Power, possible: if the God of truth,
 by whose power alone it is supposed a thing
 can be brought about, has declared “ it shall
 “ not be,” it may, to all *intents* and pur-
 poses, be considered as a thing impossible that
 it should ever happen; and no more is the
 least expectation of it to be entertained than
 if the very notion of it, or the terms in
 which it is expressed, involved the plainest
 absurdity and contradiction. And that this
 is, in reality, the case, with regard to “ a
 “ sinner’s going on in a vicious course to
 “ the last, and then escaping future punish-
 “ ment, by any repentance he can then
 “ make;” that the plain decisions of God
 in his word stand against it, and declare *it*
shall never be, ’tis the purpose of my present
 attempt to shew.

And though the clearest evidences and
 strongest proofs I am to adduce, to this pur-
 pose, are taken from the plain and positive
 declarations of Holy Scripture, particularly
 of the *Gospel*, by which *life and immortality*
is brought to light; yet there are not want-
 ing

ing considerable proofs to the same purpose, drawn from the nature and reason of things: from the unalterable nature of God, with *whom we have to do*; from the nature of man, and the condition in which he is placed in this world; from the great design of religion; and the nature of true, of rational and virtuous, happiness. These it may be proper to consider a little, in the first place; as they may give some light to the declarations of Scripture concerning this matter, as well as derive a good deal from them. I shall not here enter into the enquiry whether, and how far, a future state of happiness may be *demonstrated* by the light of nature and reason alone, without any assistance from Divine Revelation: but, upon the supposition of such a state, it may be shewn, with the greatest evidence of reason, that not only beginnings, but considerable improvements in virtue, are necessary to fit us for the happiness of it. And that,

I. From the nature of God, on whose unalterable Nature and moral Character the surest reasonings in religion are founded. Not only does our happiness intirely *depend* upon Him: this is the case, even with regard to our *inferior* enjoyments, of whatever kind; *all* depend upon Him, the author of our frame, and of *all* our capacities, who “giveth us richly *all* things to enjoy:” it is the case of the creatures *below* us; “the eyes
“ of

“ of *all* things wait upon Him, and He
 “ giveth them their food in due season; He
 “ openeth his hand and filleth them with
 “ good.” But *our* chief happiness lies in
 Him, in his favour and fellowship: now to
 maintain this, a conformity in our temper
 and prevailing disposition to his moral cha-
 racter is necessary.

Now it is the unalterable property of his
 nature, that he is perfectly holy, entirely
 removed and averse from *all* moral pollu-
 tion and defilement: from whence we may
 certainly conclude, that “ evil cannot dwell
 “ with Him;” that the wicked and impure
 can have no *fellowship* with Him; for He
 “ hateth all the workers of iniquity:” with-
 al, He “ looks not only on the outward ap-
 “ pearance,” as men do, but “ looks into
 “ the heart;” and therefore, regards not
 the specious professions, and fairest outward
 appearances, where the *heart* is *not right*
with him; and where *it is*, that will appear
 in the tenor of the life and conduct; for
 “ a good man, out of the good treasure of
 “ his heart, bringeth forth good things.”

What excellent specimens of such argu-
 ings do the Holy Scriptures give us, in short
 and strong expressions? 1 Jo. i. 5, 6, 7.
 “ God is light, and in Him is no darkness
 “ at all;” His whole conduct is perfectly
 pure, and will abide the strongest light; He
 is intirely removed from any *fellowship* with
 those

those *works of darkness*, which are naturally odious, and shun the light: and therefore, “ if we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.” Some more of these scriptural reasonings will occur afterwards. But, from what has been offered, it plainly appears, from the unalterable moral character of God, that it is only so far as we improve in goodness and moral excellency, that we can increase in His favour, and advance to our true happiness in *fellowship with him*; and that, to be perfectly happy, we must be perfectly holy and good.

2. Let us consider, in the same view, the nature of man, and the condition in which he is placed in this world. His mind is endued with the noblest capacities, both for contemplation and for action; and the seeds of good affections, of benevolence and the love of goodness, are implanted in our frame: but these capacities must be *improved* by careful exercise, in order to their being put to their proper *uses*, and our reaping the *advantage* of them and the *enjoyments* for which they qualify us. These seeds of goodness must be cherished by diligent culture, in order to their arriving at that extent and improvement in knowledge, in goodness, and divine love, which will issue in a complete

and confirmed state of piety and virtue, and of rational and virtuous happiness. When first we receive the happy turn and disposition, to set about this culture and improvement in good earnest, we are then *entered* on the true way to happiness: but a great part of our work remains, to carry forward these good beginnings; and we cannot, certainly, be reckoned to have *finished* this work when we have only *begun* it. Moreover, we are creatures of a mixed frame: as we have spirits formed for the noblest purposes, so we have bodies of earth liable to various frailties: in order to the support of these bodies, and to suit our present condition in this world, we are endowed with various appetites and passions; which, in their regular state, are not only useful but necessary to our present frame and *situation*; but are apt, without careful restraint and watchful culture, to grow extravagant and excessive: and we are surrounded with various objects, suited to these inferior appetites and passions, which are apt to draw us off from those spiritual exercises and improvements that belong and contribute to the perfection and happiness of our *better part*: it therefore becomes a matter of great and long exercise, to regulate our *inferior* passions and appetites, and bring them into due order; to cultivate and improve the affections of divine love and brotherly kindness; to subdue the flesh

to

to the spirit, and bring our lower appetites into subjection to our more exalted affections: this is a work, according to all the views reason and experience give us of it, not to be performed at *once*; not without *frequent* efforts, and a constant struggle: and this is our exercise here, in this state of *imperfection*; in order to our advancement to a state of *perfection* and complete happiness in a better world, where virtue shall be *triumphant*, and become superior to all disturbance or opposition.

3. If we further consider the nature of our true happiness; we must be sensible, that it is of no such importance to our happiness what *place* we are in, as what *spirit we are of*; what *enjoyments* we are possessed of, and what *temper* we are in to relish them: if our minds are formed into the temper of bliss, and we enjoy the highest satisfactions our nature is capable of, we shall be happy *wherever* we have that temper and enjoyment; but, if we are destitute of the temper of bliss, change of place will signify nothing; for we can be happy *no where*. Heaven, therefore, is not so much a different *place* from that where we now are, as a different *state* from the present; and it is by the *temper* of our minds we must make our *approaches* to it. The *perfection* of any creature is the foundation of its *happiness*; and the *utmost* happiness any creature is capable

of, is only to be obtained in the state of its *utmost* perfection: and as the true perfection of *such* creatures as *we* are, consists in rational and virtuous improvements, it is only so far as we advance in these that we can enjoy our true happiness; and, in all nature, the most perfect state of any creature does not take place *all at once*, but arises from *small beginnings*, by a *gradual* and beautiful *progress*. We are creatures formed not barely for contemplation, but for action and employment; to be useful to one another, and to find our perfection and happiness, not only in the contemplation of the most glorious object of our thoughts, but in the proper exercise of our active powers. The Abilities our great Creator has furnished us with, the Affections he has implanted in our hearts, the Circumstances in which he has placed us in His world, do plainly shew us formed by Him not to be *idle*, or meerly *contemplative*, but *active* and *useful* creatures; and thus to improve in a truly amiable character, and a capacity for happiness in the most perfect society: a happiness founded in a temper of intire good affection to the general welfare of the rational world; and of hearty devotion, and allegiance to the kind Father and universal Governor of the rational kingdom: for, not only are we formed for the exercise of love and beneficence towards those of our own kind; but
for

for a more extensive exercise of kindness and good-will towards the whole body of reasonable beings ; and the highest love and devotion to the perfectly wise and good Governour of the world ; a hearty affection to his government, by which the general happiness is secured ; an intire submiffion to his orders, and refignation to *all* his wife appointments. This temper and conduct is the moft proper exercife and improvement of our nobleft powers ; the true perfection of our nature ; and the foundation of our higheft happiness, which *muft* be founded in the difpofition of our minds : this Temper will afford the greateft enjoyment we can have in our *prefent* ftate, fo far as it prevails ; and, in its Perfection, is the foundation of the higheft and moft lafting joy : and we can only advance towards perfect blifs, fo far as we improve in this. To promote fuch a Temper, and an answerable conduct, is the great purpofe and Design of true and valuable Religion ; which, when received in its proper influence into the heart, has the moft direct and powerful tendency this way. True religion, as it presents us with a juft object of our moft delightful contemplation, our higheft veneration and love, our moft intire devotion and refignation, in the infinitely glorious and bleffed God ; fo it greatly ftrengthens *all* thofe difpofitions of goodness and integrity, which belong to a truly

worthy and amiable character: this it does by the influence of the most glorious and perfect Example; and the love of the perfection of goodness and righteousness, animating us to imitate that great object of our love and adoration: by a regard and Reverence for the greatest and most awful presence and observation: by the Authority of that great *Lawgiver, who is able to save or to destroy*: and, in fine, by a regard to the favour and Approbation of the great and good Governour of the world; who, as he is *the righteous Lord, loveth righteousness*. The great design of religion, therefore, is to make us good and useful *here*, and thus train us up to happiness *hereafter*.

To conclude this branch of the argument: *all* enjoyment, of any kind, necessarily supposes a taste for that kind of enjoyment; nor can our satisfaction, in any entertainment, rise higher than our relish for it is improved. Now, the true happiness of such creatures as *we* are is not to be found in the whole circle of outward things, nor in the highest gratifications of sense; but in such rational and virtuous enjoyments, as a meer sensual man has no relish for; in which no man can have delight, but so far as he is improved in true goodness and divine love, has subdued the flesh to the spirit, and brought his *inferior* appetites in subjection to those *nobler* dispositions. So that it is a maxim evidently
 2 founded

founded in nature and reason, that *grace is glory begun, and glory is grace perfected.*

But the proofs of this great point drawn from the declarations of Holy Scripture are peculiarly striking; and should be of special force with those who profess to believe the Christian Revelation, and to derive their chief comfort and hopes of future happiness from it: they are taken from these considerations.

1. From the consideration of the great design of Christianity, and of our blessed Saviour's coming into the world, and his death

2. From the representations the word of God gives us of the great business of a Christian, and his preparation for the heavenly bliss, as a progressive work; only *begun* in his first conversion; and to be gradually carried on to it's proper improvement and perfection, by the course of a holy and good life, and a faithful striving against sin. Agreeably to which,

3. The promises of future happiness are all along, throughout the tenor of Holy Scripture, made to a holy and good life; without the least hint of the alternative, that the person who has neglected it bitterly regrets that neglect at last: and the threatnings of future misery against the *workers of iniquity*, are made without any reserve or exception, particularly, without the exception of a man's repenting at last that he had been so.

4. God

4. God expressly threatens to give a deaf ear to their cries at last, and in the day of their distress, who refuse to hearken to his calls in time.

5. There is no *one* promise in the whole Word of God which gives the least countenance or encouragement to the hopes of happiness upon a late or death-bed repentance. Nor,

6. Is there any *one* instance in Holy Writ, of a sinner's being accepted of God, or admitted into the happiness of heaven, upon such a repentance.

7. Lastly, The conduct of our blessed Saviour and his Apostles, in calling sinners to repentance, is perfectly agreeable to, and a confirmation of, the plan here maintained. In the

First place, It is plainly declared to be the main design of the Gospel, and of our blessed Saviour's coming into the world, and his death, to recover and reclaim men from sin and vice, and bring them back to that conformity to God in holiness and goodness, in which (and in his favour) their only true happiness lies. In compassion to the wretched circumstances of sinful men, fallen from their true happiness and become miserable, by having fallen from true goodness, and become wicked and rebellious against God; the Son of God came into this world, to deliver men from this degenerate and miserable

ferable condition. It may be obvious to an attentive and serious consideration, that, in this wretched state of human nature, our sin and moral depravity is, in its own nature and influence, the worst part of our calamity, and cause of all the rest; and it is only so far as we are delivered from this, that we can be freed from those evils which naturally attend it and follow upon it. And therefore it *must* be the chief design of a Saviour, who would effectually deliver us from misery, and bring us to true happiness; in the first place to save us from our vices, and bring us back to holiness and goodness; and not merely to such low and faint beginnings of goodness, as can go but a very little way to restore our peace and promote our inward enjoyment; but to such improvements in all piety and virtue, as may be a natural progress towards a state of perfection in holiness, the foundation of perfect bliss.

Accordingly, when Christ came into the world as the Saviour, and had that name given to him by divine appointment, from what Salvation is it that He is so called? *Matt. i. 21.* “Thou shalt call His name “*Jesus*, for He shall save His people *from* “*their sins.*” This is also declared by the great design of all that he did and suffered for our redemption; of that depth of ignominy He submitted to bear, and those bitter sufferings He endured for our sakes; in
which,

which, *Tit.* ii. 14. He “ gave Himself for
 “ us, that he might redeem us from *all ini-*
 “ *quity*, and might *purify* unto Himself a
 “ peculiar people, *zealous of good works.*”
 and the final issue of this gracious design is
 thus described ; *Eph.* v. 25—27. “ Christ
 “ loved the church ; and gave Himself for
 “ it, that He might *sanctify and cleanse it,*
 “ with the washing of water by the word ;
 “ that he might present it to Himself a glo-
 “ rious church, not having *spot or wrinkle,*
 “ or any such thing ; but that it should be
 “ *holy and without blemish.*”

For bringing about this great salvation ;
 and leading his people to their true happi-
 ness, by the natural way to it, purity and
 goodness ; among other offices our Redeemer
 sustains, He is set forth to us as bearing the
 character of our great Master and Instruc-
 tor, our Leader and Commander ; and, as
 such, He has delivered to us the most full
 and clear instructions, concerning those
 things that belong to the improvement and
 perfection of our nature, our peace and hap-
 piness : these instructions our great Lord and
 Master has delivered to us, as His com-
 mands ; enjoining our observation of them
 by His authority, and enforcing it by all the
 ties of love we are under to Him : nor is it
 left entirely upon our ingenuity, or grati-
 tude, whether we will obey them, or not ;
 but, as they are the *laws* of our great King
 and

and Lawgiver, they are enforced by the most awful *sanctions*: on the one hand, Christ is declared to be *the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him*; and the most encouraging promises of *eternal life* are made to “them who, *by a patient continuance in well-doing*, seek for glory, honour and immortality;” and, on the other hand, the most fearful and everlasting punishments are denounced against all who *go on in their trespasses*, and will not, by all the methods of Divine mercy, be reclaimed.

Agreeably to all this, three things are, by the tenor of the Gospel, required of us, in order to our eternal salvation; which are all declared absolutely necessary to it; and, withal, are set forth as answering such *different purposes* in that great affair, as, if duly considered, might suffice to show, that no one of them can supercede the necessity of the others. 1. *Faith* in Jesus Christ; whereby we heartily receive Him as our Saviour and Lord: this is required, in order to our obtaining a right and title to salvation, according to the tenor of the Gospel-covenant; whereby our renewed title to that happiness, we had forfeited by our sin and rebellion, is founded on the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, and His *obedience unto death*; in which God shows His love to holiness and perfect virtue: and in this perfect merit we are interested, by receiving Christ as our
Saviour

Saviour and our Lord. This faith, also, is fundamentally necessary to our receiving His instructions, and obeying His commands.

2. *Repentance*: not a meer Sorrow for sin; however deep and piercing: this is required, only as subservient to that Amendment, in which repentance consists: and never, throughout the whole Scripture, is repentance required of a dying sinner, as the fruitless close of a bad life; but always of men in life, as the fruitful beginning of a holy and good life. 3. *Holiness* of heart and life: not meer beginnings of goodness; but a constant progress, and a *patient continuance in well-doing*: nor is this required as an *arbitrary condition* of our obtaining future happiness; which, it might be thought the supreme Lord and Judge might dispense with at pleasure; but as, in the nature of the thing, a *necessary preparation for it*; and therefore, by no means to be dispensed with. So that, of these three things, required by the Gospel to our eternal salvation, we may observe; that no *one* of them can supply the place of any of the *others*, or supersede the necessity of the rest; because it does not answer the *purpose*, for which they serve, in order to our salvation. By *faith* in Christ we obtain a *right* to the heavenly inheritance: but as an infant-heir, though he has a *right* to the estate, is not to enter upon the *possession* of it, 'till he arrives at the *age* at which he is presumed

fumed *fit* to use and enjoy it; so the true
 believer, though *intitled* to the heavenly in-
 heritance, is not to come to the *possession* of
 it, 'till the sovereign and all-seeing Disposer
 of it sees him *meet* to enter upon it; which
 he can only become by a *patient continuance*
in well-doing: and, as a holy life cannot
 supply the place of faith in Christ, to give us
 a right and title to the kingdom of heaven;
 no more can faith supply the place of a holy
 life, to make us meet and fit for it. True
 Faith in Christ regards His blood and righte-
 ousness, as the attonement and *propitiation*
 for the *sins* we *forsake*: but to regard it, as
 procuring an *indulgence* for us to *continue* in
 sin, would be the most horrid profanation;
 a *counting the blood of the Covenant, whereby*
we are sanctified, an unholy thing! Re-
 pentance, 'tis plain, cannot supply the place
 of holiness; because the first beginnings of
 it are in order to our leading an holy life for
 the future; and are an *entrance* on that
 course of a *patient continuance in well-doing*,
 which leads to *glory*, &c. Further; of these
 things required by the Gospel, in order to
 our eternal salvation, holiness is the *end* of
 all the rest: and, therefore, not only are that
 repentance and faith *vain*, and of no avail
 to our salvation, which are not effectual
 principles of holiness; but even such true
 and sincere repentance and faith, as are ef-
 fectual principles, and real beginnings of

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holi-

holiness in the soul, are not sufficient to render us *immediately fit* for the heavenly bliss; 'till we make further improvements in holiness, by a course of obedience to the commands of Christ. And, for this, I might appeal to the experience of sincere Christians, who are *exercised unto godliness*, and in whose *hearts* are the *ways of God*; who know and find, that a great deal remains to be done, for *working out* their *salvation*; even after, by sincere faith and repentance, they are happily entered upon the way to it. A great deal remains to be done, in mortifying and subduing corrupt lusts and irregular passions, more and more; in practising all the duties of piety and virtue, of devotion to God, and an useful life among men, the duties of their several stations and relations; in the regular government of all their appetites; in resisting and overcoming all the trials and temptations they meet with in this world: and all, in order to their improvement and advancement in every grace and virtue; that they may thus become *meet* for entering upon the enjoyments of a state of perfection, and *fit* for the reward and crown of Him that *overcomes*.

Upon the whole, then, it is abundantly evident, that the main design of the Gospel, and of our blessed Saviour's coming into the world and his death, is to recover men from sin and vice; and bring them back to that

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conformity to God in holiness and goodness, in which their true happiness lies : this is the great lesson we are taught, by *the grace of God*, that “ hath appeared bringing salvation to us ; that denying ungodliness and “ worldly lusts, we should *live soberly,* “ *righteously and godly in this present world,* “ looking for that blessed hope, &c.” *Tit.* ii. 11. 13. For this purpose, there are “ given to us exceeding great and precious “ promises, through the knowledge of him “ that hath called us to glory and virtue, “ that *by these* we might be *partakers of a* “ *Divine nature, having escaped* the corruption that is in the world through lust,” *2 Pet.* i. 3, 4. And it is, withal, declared, that “ the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from “ heaven, with His mighty angels, in “ flaming fire, taking vengeance on them “ that know not God, and that *obey not the* “ *Gospel* of our Lord Jesus Christ,” *2 Thess.* i. 7, 8. So that, the great design of Christ, and His Gospel, is not *meerly* to deliver sinners from *miser*y, and bring them to *happiness* at last ; by no means, to deliver them only from the pains of sense, and bring them to a state of *sensual gratifications*, or *any enjoyment* consistent with vice ; but, to restore true piety and virtue to a degenerate world ; to bring men back to the true perfection of their nature ; and not only to the first beginnings of moral excellency, but to such

improvements as are necessary to their entrance on a state of pure bliss. Accordingly; not only, is a holy and good disposition of mind necessary to any beginnings of true happiness; but, as the heavenly bliss is founded in the perfection of holiness, to fit us for *that* not only the first beginnings of piety and goodness, but further improvements, by the course of a holy and good life, are, in the nature of the thing, necessary; and plainly declared to be so, throughout the tenor of the Gospel. A holy life is not a *task* laid upon us here, to entitle us to a reward hereafter; but, is a natural *progress* to our complete happiness, necessary to make us meet for it: and it can no more be a proper act of *mercy* in God to *dispense* with it, than to *dispense* with our happiness; for 'tis only so far as a man is *improved* in holiness, that he can either have *complacency* in God, or *God* in him.

But, lest it should be thought, that, notwithstanding all that has been said, such *improvements* in holiness as to fit a man for the heavenly bliss may be attained *all at once*, by such Divine aids as we are not forbid to expect; and so may *possibly* be attained by a sinner, even in his *last moments*: let us consider,

In the Second place; that the business of a Christian, and his preparation for the heavenly state, is, all along in Scripture, represented as a progressive work; only begun, in
his

his first conversion ; and to be gradually carried on, to its proper improvement and perfection, by the course of a holy and good life, and a faithful *striving against sin*.

I might even observe here ; “ that our
 “ state in this life being a state of trial and
 “ exercise, in order to our future reward
 “ and triumph, arises not meerly from our
 “ sinful imperfections ; but from the condition of human nature, in its original
 “ frame and constitution.” Even *Adam*, in his first creation, though he was made *innocent* ; yet was not so *perfect* and *confirmed in goodness*, but that he still stood in need of further improvement : he was created with a faculty to judge aright ; and with a power to govern his appetites, which he could controul far more easily than we can do now : yet he was not immutably good ; but might, without due care and watchfulness, be induced to do evil ; as we see he was : for an habituated, confirmed state of goodness was, even then, to have been acquired by watchfulness and exercise ; whereby he might, in time, have become so stedfast, as not to be prevailed upon, by any temptation, to act contrary to his duty. Nay, (what may justly appear more strange and affecting) the great *Captain of our salvation* himself has gone before us to His glory, by a course of obedience and patience. As Christians, we are to be followers of Christ, and *conformed to the*
 D 3 *image*

image of the Son of God: and this circumstance, with regard to Him, may well appear wonderful and striking; that, though His human nature was perfectly immaculate from the first; yet He entered not upon His glory, but through a course of trial. He was originally free from the least stain of irregular inclinations, or corrupt affections; and, from the very first, had in Him the unpolluted principle of all those amiable virtues, which afterwards discovered themselves in his life; by a gradual display of which, from his childhood, he *increased in favour with God and man*: through the course of His life, He *did no sin, neither was guile found in His lips*; He was *holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners*; and could challenge His most inveterate enemies, *which of you convinceth me of sin*: he had, therefore, no sins to repent of, no bad inclinations to amend, no relicts of corruption to subdue: and yet, He did not enter upon that Reward and Glory to which, in his human nature, He is now advanced; but by passing through a *course of trial*; and, by the most exact and intire obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, giving the utmost proof of His consummate Piety and Goodness! And, is it to be expected, that any of His weak and imperfect followers should get to their reward *all at once*; without any trial or discipline, to train them up to it?

This

This would be contrary to the whole tenor of Holy Scripture; which represents the state of a Christian, in this life, as a state of trial and exercise, discipline and improvement, in order to his advancement to a more perfect state: and the work of sanctification is, all along, set forth as a progressive work; from lesser beginnings, gradually carried on to its perfection: so that the place and use of the first repentance, is not to make a man *immediately fit* for heaven; far less, to conclude, and make up for, an ill-spent life, by a meer regret for having led such a life; but, to *begin* the course of a good life; whereby, through a gradual progress in holiness and goodness, he is to be trained up for a state of perfection.

In the several metaphors the Scripture makes use of, to set forth the work of grace; and the emblematical representations our blessed Saviour gives us of it; it is always represented as taking its rise from small beginnings; and, by a gradual progress, carried on to its perfection in glory. The foundation and propriety of these images and metaphors plainly lies here; that this is a thing, in which the course of Nature and the conduct of Grace are harmonious, and bear a beautiful correspondence the one with the other; that the most perfect state of things is not produced *all at once*; but every thing has its *small beginnings*; and is from thence
carried

carried on, by several steps and *degrees*, to its proper *perfection*. And, in applying such figures and metaphors, the natural and obvious meaning of them is carefully to be attended to ; the purpose for which the similitude is plainly brought in ; the meaning, without which there would be no propriety, or sense in the allusion ; and especially the meaning in which they plainly concur ; so as not only any one of them gives light to the others ; but also one branch of the similitude gives light to the other, that which represents the Progress to that which expresses the first Beginning of the Christian life. To proceed to particulars :

The first entrance of true religion into the heart, is represented as a *New Birth* ; and it's progress as a growth, or growing up : now, as a child new-born, though it has human life in it, yet is not fit for manly exercises and entertainments, but grows up to them by slow steps ; in like manner, a Christian, newly converted, must grow up by degrees to those stronger exercises of piety and goodness, and that higher relish of virtuous enjoyments, for which he is *created in Christ Jesus unto good works* : and therefore the Apostle exhorts his new converts, 1 *Pet.* ii. 2, 3. “ As new born babes, “ desire the sincere milk of the word, that “ ye may *grow* thereby ; if so be ye have “ tasted that the Lord is gracious.” Again ;

the first *beginning* of the Christian life is represented under the emblem of a branch engrafted into a living stock; and it's *progress* under that of bringing forth fruit, and *much fruit*, Jo. xv. 1.—Again; the entrance on the Christian life is represented as *laying a foundation*; it's progress as *building* upon it: 1 Cor. iii. 9, &c. Eph. iv. 12, &c. and ii. 20, &c. Again; the Christian life is compared to *running in a race*, which is a constant and a quick motion forward, without stopping, going back, or turning aside; in which it is not enough to *start fair*, and run on a while; but one must run on, till he reaches the *Goal*, to *obtain the prize*: 1 Cor. ix. 24. Heb. xii. 1. Further; the state of a Christian in this life is represented as a *warfare*; and his perfect state is set forth under the emblems of a Victory and Triumph: Rev. ii. 7, 11, 17, 26. and iii. 5, 12, 21. now, in a *warfare*, it is not enough to *enter the lists*; nay, to fight *one battle*, or gain *one conquest*; but we must persist in the *contest*, till our *warfare is accomplished*; and, by a train of Victories, we have gained a compleat Triumph: thus, the Christian must *fight the good fight of faith*, if he would *lay hold of eternal life*, 1 Tim. vi. 12. and the Apostle says of himself, ii. 4, 7, 8. *I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, &c.* Again;

gain; the progress of religion is set forth by the growing of corn; in which, says our blessed Saviour, *Mark* iv. 28. *The earth bringeth forth—first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.* And, in fine, says the Wise Man; “the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day,” *Prov.* iv. 18.

If, now, we pass from the *figurative* to the *plain* descriptions of the life of a Christian; and the *work* that remains for him to do, after a *good work* is begun in him; they all point the same way. “Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, says the apostle, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God.” *Heb.* vi. 1. To believers the exhortation is, “As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him; rooted and built up in Him.” *Col.* ii. 6, 7. and *Gal.* ii. 20. says the apostle, “I live by the faith of the Son of God.” ’Tis not to them who only begin to do well, but “to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honour and immortality,” that God will give *eternal life*, *Rom.* ii. 7. And, they who have begun the work of their salvation, and even given former proofs of their obedience to the gospel, must still work out their own salvation with fear

fear and trembling, Phil. ii. 12. *fearing*, as the apostle expresses it, Heb. iv. 1. “left a
 “promise being left us, of entering into His
 “rest, any of us should seem to *come short*
 “of it.” To true Christians is both the
 threatening and the promise addressed, Rom.
 viii. 13. “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall
 “die; but if ye, through the spirit, do
 “mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall
 “live:” agreeably to what the Lord says,
 by the prophet, Ezek. xxxiii. 18. “When
 “the righteous man turneth from his righ-
 “teousness, and committeth iniquity, he
 “shall even die thereby.” * And, says our
 blessed Lord, to those Jews who believed on
 Him, Jo. viii. 31. “If ye continue in my
 “word, then are ye my disciples indeed,
 &c.” and to his particular disciples, of whom
 He says, *As the Father hath loved me, so have*
I loved you, He adds, “continue ye in my
 “love; if ye keep my commandments, ye shall
 “abide in my love; even as I have kept
 “my Father’s commandments, and abide in
 “his love.” xv. 9, 10. And, says the apostle
Peter, to them that had obtained like precious
faith with the apostles, ii. 1. 5.—“giving
 “all diligence, add to your faith virtue, &c.
 “—for if these things be in you, and a-
 “bound, they make you that ye shall nei-
 “ther be barren nor unfruitful in the know-
 “ledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Again;

* See also the 13th verse of that chapter.

says

says the Apostle *Paul*, to those who had *believed* as the Apostles *preached*, “ Be ye stedfast and unmoveable, *always abounding in the work of the Lord*; for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” 1 Cor. xv. 11, 58. In fine, the Apostle *Peter*, enjoins *growth in grace*, not only as a proper improvement of what Christians had attained unto; but as necessary to prevent their *falling from their steadfastness* in religion, ii. 3. 17, 18.

And, what is thus said, in general, with respect to the obligations on Christians to constancy and advancement in their Christian course, in order to their Eternal Salvation; is *particularly* applied to the several Graces and Virtues of a Christian Life, which are *all imperfect* at first. *The saints and faithful brethren in Christ* must “ walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing; being fruitful in every good work, and *increasing in the knowledge of God*.” Col. i. 2, 10. They who have received *Christ Jesus the Lord*, must be *stablished in the faith*, and *abound therein*. Col. ii. 7. our love must *abound yet more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment*: Phil. i. 9. we must *increase and abound in love one towards another, and to all men*: 1 Thess. iii. 12. our *patience must have its perfect work*: Ja. i. 4. and we must *abound to every good work*: 2 Cor. ix. 8.

This

This improvement of Christians is represented as the *great End* of *all* the assistances, afforded to us by the Gospel; *all* the ordinances and appointments of our blessed Lord and Saviour. The Ministry and Ministers of the Gospel are appointed, not merely for the *conversion* of Sinners; but *chiefly* for the *improvement* of Saints: *Eph. iv. 11.*—"He
 " gave some apostles—and some pastors
 " and teachers; for the *perfecting* of the
 " Saints—for the *edifying* of the body of
 " Christ; till we all come—unto a *perfect*
 " man, &c. that we be no more *children*, &c.
 " —but—may *grow up* unto Him in *all*
 " things who is the Head, even Christ."

All this may be confirmed by the examples of those, who have trod the paths of *virtue* and *glory* before us. *To which*, indeed, *of the Saints* shall the careless sinner *turn*; (who thinks to mount to Heaven *at once*, in the end of a vicious life;) who will not, from their own experience, confute his folly? Are not all the examples recorded in Scripture for our imitation, of such as, not only *through faith*, but through *patience*, continuance, perseverance, and improvement, have come to *inherit the promises*? and the *use* we are to make of such examples is plainly pointed out, *Heb. vi. 11, 12.*
 " that every one of us do shew the *same diligence*, to the full assurance of hope unto
 " the end; that we be not *slothful*, but fol-
 E " lowers

“ lowers of them, who, &c.” I shall single out but One example: but it is such a *one*, as may stir up all of us, who have any thing of the Divine Life in us, to *work out our own Salvation with fear and trembling*: it is the example of the great Apostle *Paul*. He was, before his conversion to Christianity, *concerning the righteousness that is in the law, blameless*: He was, then, zealous for what He believed to be the Truth; though His zeal was irregular, and ill-governed: yet, notwithstanding all the prejudices of His education and against all the force of His misguided zeal, He became a Convert to Christianity; and entered upon it, from the very first, as a state of *suffering* in this world: *Acts ix. 16* He declares, that *for this cause* He obtained mercy, that in him first “ Jesus Christ might “ shew forth *all long suffering*, for a pattern “ to those which should afterwards believe on “ Him to life everlasting;” *1 Tim i. 16.* a glorious and encouraging pattern of *all long-suffering*, as to what was *past*! but let us see what *followed* after; and, if we would have His Case a pattern for our *encouragement*, let us set His Practice before us as a pattern of our *duty*: what ardor of love and gratitude to our merciful God and gracious Redeemer, what fervor of charity, did He discover! and *all* mingled with the most sensible regret, for the errors of his past life; which he can never speak of but with the deepest self-abase-

abasement, and the most profound admiration of the freedom and greatness of Divine Grace to such a one as He had been: how diligent and indefatigable was He, in the service of God and the blessed Redeemer; and in doing good to men, and promoting their greatest happiness, in the most disinterested manner? and after he had gone on, in such an indefatigable *course of good works*, for about twenty-five years *, what does He say of Himself? *Phil. iii. 12—15.* “Not
 “ as though I had already attained, either
 “ were *already perfect*; but I *follow after*,
 “ &c.—I count not myself to have apprehended; but this *one thing* I do; *forgetting* those things which are *behind*, and
 “ *reaching forth* unto those things which are
 “ *before*, I *press towards the mark* for the
 “ prize of the high calling of God in Christ
 “ Jesus.”

So striking an instance I shall leave the application of to every Christian's own thoughts, without any descanting upon it.

And thus, I think, I have shown with the strongest Evidence, “ that the business
 “ of a Christian, and his preparation for
 “ the Heavenly State, is all along in Scripture represented as a *progressive* work;
 “ only *begun* in his first conversion; and

* It was, probably, so long after His first conversion, before He wrote the Epistle to the Philippians.

“ to be further improved, and carried on
 “ by degrees to its proper *perfection*, by
 “ the course of a holy and good life; in
 “ order to his entering on the Heavenly
 “ blifs.”

But, lest it should be thought, that all this *may* admit of *some* exceptions; and still there *may* be *some* room left to hope, that a work of Grace may be not only *really begun*, but considerably *improved*, in the Sinner's last moments, whereby he may be, *even then*, made fit for Heaven, by such extraordinary measures of Divine Grace as God *can* easily grant, and has no where forbid us to expect: I shall now proceed to what, I hope, will be allowed still *more decisive* upon this head.

And, not to insist upon it, how unwarrantable all expectations of such extraordinary and *miraculous* Divine aids are, unless we had an *express revelation* from God to build such expectations upon; and that they, of all men, can have the least warrant for such expectations, who improve them to encourage their going on presumptuously in a vicious course: I say further, in the

Third place: that the Promises of future Happiness are, throughout the tenor of Holy Scripture, made to a Holy and good life; without the least hint of the *alternative*, that a man repents at last his having neglected it: and the threatnings of future punishment,

nishment, to the *workers of iniquity*, as they are most positive and peremptory, so are made without the least reserve or exception ; particularly, without the exception of a man's *bitterly regretting* at last that he had been so. So that, by these Promises and Threatnings, it is plainly and expressly declared, “ that the *future states* of all men “ shall be determined at last according to “ their *works*, in the *course* of this life ; and “ not according to any *extraordinary change*, “ contrary to it, wrought in them in their “ last moments :” and, by the tenor of these Threatnings, *all hopes* of those *extraordinary aids*, which are acknowledged necessary to the producing such a change, are as plainly precluded and *forbidden* by God, as if the thing was declared *absolutely impossible*.

We shall consider these Promises and Threatnings together : and indeed, they are, for the most part, so joined together in Holy Writ, that they will hardly admit of a *separate consideration* ; and so as they throw mutual light and force upon one another.

Whether we consider the Old Testament, or the New ; the words of *Moses* and the Prophets, or of our blessed Saviour and his Apostles ; they all concur in representing to us a Holy and good life as the *only way* to future happiness. And, tho' the Revelation of the Old Testament gives

but obscure and imperfect hints of that *life and immortality*, which is *brought to light by the Gospel*; yet it seems to afford strong enough assurances, that *no hopes* of it can be entertained, but in the way of a Holy life here; and *only in this way* are those great and good men in ancient times, who seem to have had the expectation of it, represented as entertaining any hope of it. The worthys, in these old times, who *obtained a good report through Faith*, obtained it by an *Active Faith*; which animated them to a steady and unreserved obedience to God, in the most difficult and trying cases: by this Faith *Abraham*, the father of the faithful, upon *God's call*, “obeyed, and went
 “forth, not knowing whither he went;” contented with this, that he well-knew *whose Call he followed*: “for he looked for a
 “city that hath foundations, whose builder
 “and maker is God: *Heb. xi. 8, 10.* By
 “this Faith *Moses*——chose rather to *suf-*
 “fer affliction with the people of God,
 “than to enjoy the *pleasures of sin* for a
 “season; for he had respect unto the re-
 “compence of reward.” And let us ad-
 vert to the *characters* given of those who shall *ascend into the hill of the Lord, abide in his tabernacle, and dwell in his Holy place*; *Pf. xv. and xxiv. 3.*——And, *Pf. xxxvii. 37, 38.* “Mark the perfect man, and
 “behold the upright; for the *end* of that
 “man

“ man is peace : but the transgressors shall
 “ be destroyed together, the *end* of the
 “ *wicked shall be cut off.*” And, lxviii. 20,
 21. when it is said, *our God is the God*
of salvation, it is added, “ but God shall
 “ wound the head of his enemies, and the
 “ hairy scalp of such a one as *goeth on still*
 “ *in his trespasses.*” And, says the Psalmist
 of himself, cxix. 166. “ Lord, I have *hoped*
 “ for thy *salvation*, and *done thy command-*
 “ *ments* : and 174. I have longed for thy
 “ *salvation*, O Lord, and thy *law* is my
 “ *delight.*” And says the Lord to the Pro-
 phet, *Isa.* iii. 10, 11. “ say ye to the righ-
 “ teous, that it shall be well with him ;
 “ for they shall eat *the fruit* of their *do-*
 “ *ings* : wo unto the wicked, it shall be
 “ ill with him ; for the *reward* of *his hands*
 “ shall be given him.”

In the New Testament, as we have the
 most clear and full discovery of *life and im-*
mortality, brought to light by the Gospel ; so,
the wrath of God is more clearly and expressly
revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and
unrighteousness of men, Mat. xvi. 27. Our
 blessed Lord tells us expressly, that when *he*
shall come in the glory of his Father, with his
holy Angels ; “ then he shall reward every
 “ man according to his works.” And *Jo.* v.
 28, 29. He warns his hearers, that “ the
 “ hour is coming, in which all that are in
 “ the graves shall hear His voice ; and shall
 “ come .

“ come forth, they that have *done good* unto
 “ the *resurrection of life*, and they that have
 “ *done evil* unto the *resurrection of damna-*
 “ *tion.*” When the Apostle *Peter* was well-
 taught, by an heavenly vision ; he says, “ of
 “ a truth I perceive that God is no *respector*
 “ *of persons* ; but in *every nation* he that
 “ feareth God and *worketh righteousness* is
 “ accepted with Him.” And the like sen-
 timent He expresses, when he says, in his
 1st *Epist.* i. 17. that the Father, “ without
 “ *respect of persons*, judgeth according to
 “ *every man’s work* ;” and therefore, they
 who *call on him* must “ pass the time of their
 “ *sojourning here in fear.*” And, the Apostle
Paul expressly declares, *Rom.* ii. 6.—that
 God will at last “ render to *every man* ac-
 “ cording to *his deeds*: to them who, by
 “ *patient continuance in well-doing*, seek for
 “ glory, honour, and immortality, eternal
 “ life ; but unto them that are contentious,
 “ and do not *obey the truth*,—indignation
 “ and wrath——upon *every soul of man that*
 “ *doth evil* ;—but glory, honour, and peace
 “ to *every man that worketh good*, &c.” Nor
 is this distribution of things according to the
 tenor of any antiquated, or abrogated, law ;
 but this equitable retribution shall be made
 “ in the day when God shall judge the se-
 “ crets of men by Jesus Christ,” according
 to the *Gospel* which the Apostle preached,
v. 16 : and all upon the same principle,
 which

which both Apostles, in a perfect harmony and concurrence, found upon the moral character of God; “for there is *no respect* “*of persons* with God,” v. 11: He has no regard to the outward appearances and circumstances of men; nor to any considerations foreign to their *real*, their *moral*, characters: and therefore as, on the one hand, we can hardly conceive of Him as too *indulgent* a Father, in his readiness to receive into favour sinners who truly repent and amend; so, on the other hand, we can scarce conceive of Him as too impartial and *inexorable* a judge, in his dealings with such as go on *all their life* in a sinful course; and will not, by all the methods of His mercy in time, be reclaimed and reformed. Again, the Apostle warns us, 2 Cor. v. 10. that “we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that *every one* may receive “the things *done in his body*, according to “that he *hath done*, whether it be *good* or “*bad* :” sure, no change wrought on a man in his *last moments*, can be reckoned among *things that he hath done in the body*. I pass over several other texts, to the same purpose; some of which I have already mentioned upon a former head *: and shall proceed to take particular notice of a remarkable passage, or two. One is that of the Apostle, Gal. vi. 7, 8. where He lays down

* See p. 34, 35.

the great rule of the Divine conduct ; that order of things, under His government, which is e'ſewhere expreſſed by his *rendering to every man according to his works* ; or *giving him the fruit of his doings* : a rule founded upon the moral Character of God ; for, ſays *Elihu*, *Job xxxiv. 10, 11.* “ hearken unto me, “ ye men of underſtanding ; far be it from “ God that He ſhould do wickedneſs, and “ from the Almighty that He ſhould *commit* “ *iniquity* ; for the *work* of a man ſhall He “ *render* unto him, and cauſe *every man* to “ *find according to his ways.*” It is true ; the Apoſtle is here particularly recommending and enforcing the duty of beneficence and liberality : but to me it appears as plain, that he is applying and adapting to this purpoſe a general principle, equally applicable to the enforcement of every branch of good and virtuous practice. This principle He expreſſes, in terms of alluſion to what is obſerved in the ordinary courſe of Nature, “ that men *reap in harveſt* the very ſame “ kind of grain that they *sow in the ſeed-* “ *time* :” a thing the Reverse of which is Poſſible ; but ſo contrary to the ordinary courſe of nature, and the common experience and obſervation of mankind (attentive enough to theſe *outward* things, and ſagacious enough to make juſt obſervations about them) that no man entertains the leaſt expectation that it *ever will happen* : and
would

would men apply the same attention and sagacity to their *most important concerns*; they might see it as unreasonable, and contrary to nature, to expect to find it otherwise in their spiritual affairs; to think to *reap* at last, and in the other world, any thing else than the proper and natural *fruit of their own ways*: for, the time of *this life* is our *seed-time*, in order to our *reaping* the harvest in *another life*. This serves to obviate the last refuge, to which they who go on in a sinful course in hopes of retrieving all by a late repentance, are apt to betake themselves, when beat out of all others; that *the thing is possible*: but, they might as well hope, after sowing *tares* in the Spring to reap *wheat* in the Harvest; for *that is possible* too. The Apostle ushers in His awful warning, with a particular caution against a dangerous deceit or delusion: *be not deceived*; “deceive not
 “yourself, nor suffer any others to impose
 “upon you, in a matter of so great importance to you.” He adds *God is not mocked*: men attempt to *mock* God, when they think to *impose* upon Him by fair shews and specious pretences; when the Laws and Rules of His government are *despised*, or men think they are to be *dispensed with*: but this is a *vain attempt*: God *cannot be imposed upon*; and every attempt to do it must recoil upon their own heads who make it: nor will he *pass from* the rules of His government, or
 the

the sanctions of His laws ; in favour of those obstinate wretches, who *trample* upon them. The Apostle goes on ; “ for, whatsoever a
 “ man *soweth* that shall he also *reap* :” this is his general assertion ; that it holds as well in the *spiritual* sense as in the *natural*, that men reap in the same kind as they sow : this He further explains and amplifies ; for *he that soweth to his flesh*, “ who employs his labours
 “ and his earthly possessions to the gratifying
 “ of his selfish and sensual appetites,” *shall of the flesh reap corruption* ; of such a corrupt improvement of his time and talents, he shall receive future misery, as the proper *fruit of his own ways* ; in like manner, as what one *reaps in harvest* is the *natural fruit* of what he *sows in spring* : *corruption*, in opposition to *life everlasting* ; *i. e.* the punishments of the other world : for, that the Apostle is here speaking of that *reaping*, those retributions, that shall be made at the great day of judgment, and in the other world, is further clear from the other part of His declaration ; *but he that soweth to the spirit* ; “ he who, under the influences and
 “ conduct of *the spirit of love*, employs his
 “ time, his endeavours, and the advantages
 “ he is entrusted with, to the improvement
 “ of his *better part*, and his *Usefulness* in this
 “ world ;” *he shall of the spirit reap life everlasting* ; “ under the conduct of the Divine
 “ Spirit, and as the *fruit* of such spiritual
 “ employ-

“ employments and improvements, he shall
 “ come to eternal happiness at last ”

Let me repeat it ; that here the similitude is plainly taken from a thing, the *reverse* of which is *possible* with Almighty God ; but so contrary to the course of Nature, that no man expects it, any more than if it was *impossible*. Let us put the case, that a man sows tares in his field : it is *possible*, with Almighty God, that he shall *reap* the finest wheat : but did ever any man, of a sound mind, entertain such an expectation ? how absurd would it appear, for any one to think, by the most *bitter regret* and hearty *repentance*, to *retrieve* such a bad sowing, and reap the quite contrary grain ; unless, in time, he plucked up the tares, and sowed the grain he wished to reap ? as absurd is it, according to the Apostle's comparison and awful warning, for the sinner to expect, by the most hearty regret and deepest sorrow, out of time, to *escape* the misery a vicious course has exposed him to ; when he has no opportunity to *undo* what he has been *doing* all his life, and betake himself to a better course. In the Natural sense, no man, from a *meer possibility* of the thing, ever expects to reap another kind of grain than he sows ; even though God has no where declared, that it *shall not be* ; as he has plainly declared, that *they who sow to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption*, in opposition to *life everlasting* ;

ing; by which all the vain hopes the sinner can pretend to raise from the *meer possibility* of its being otherwise, are utterly overthrown: *be not deceived; God is not mocked.*

To conclude this head: the representation which our blessed Saviour (to whom *the Father hath committed all judgment*) gives us of His procedure at the great Day of Judgment, *Matt. xxv. 31*—is full, clear, and strong, to the same purpose: then the great Judge of the world will make a distribution of men, and a different assignment of everlasting rewards or punishments to them, according to their moral characters, discovered in their *works* and the course of their *lives here*; will receive men to Happiness, or condemn them to Misery, not only as they have done good or done evil, but as they have *done* good or *neglected* to do it: let us carefully advert to this; that not only they who have employed their lives in doing *wicked* actions; but they who have *neglected* to employ them *usefully*, in doing good, beneficent, and charitable actions, as they had opportunity; are, in that great decisive Day, condemned to *everlasting punishment*. And, however they, against whom that charge is laid, are represented as attempting to *disown* it; they are not represented as *allowing* the *fact*, but yet thinking to *evade* the *sentence*, by pleading that, before they died they most heartily regretted the neglect, and
 fle

fled to the blood of Christ for pardon : *that*
 appears too *thin* a *plea*, for any to be supposed
 to dare to offer, in that awful Day, and be-
 fore that dreadful Tribunal : indeed, *if we*
walk in the light, as God is in the light, we
 may be assured that *the blood of Jesus Christ*
His Son cleanseth us from all sin : but to make
 that most *precious blood* a Sanctuary and Re-
 fuge at last, for *those* who, all the time of
their life, *have refused* when God called,
 will, according to the whole strain of Scrip-
 ture-revelation, be found, in that awful
 Day, *a counting the blood of the Covenant*
wherewith we are *sanctified an unholy thing*,
 and making *Christ the minister of sin* : then,
the righteous only shall go into life eternal :
 and *who are the righteous*, our blessed Saviour
 plainly declares in that context ; namely,
 “ they who, in the course of their lives,
 “ have done good and charitable actions,
 “ as they had opportunity ; ” the beloved
 Disciple of our Lord plainly tells us, with a
 tender caution against suffering ourselves to
 be deceived by other representations of the
 matter ; 1 *Jn.* iii. 7, 10. “ Little children,
 “ let no man *deceive* You : he that *doth* *right-*
 “ *eousness* is righteous, *even as He is* *right-*
 “ *eous* ” (an expression far from denoting
 an *equality* ; but only signifying, that his
 righteousness stands upon the *like proof* and
 evidence with the *righteousness of Christ*, or
 of *God*) and, on the other hand, “ who-

“ soever *doth not righteousness* is not of
“ God.”

Thus I have shewn, with the clearest evidence, that the promises of *future happiness*, in Scripture, run in the tenor of its being the *fruit*, and the final reward of a holy and good life; and there is no Promise, in the whole Word of God, that runs in any strain like this, “ that they shall inherit eternal life, who either live a holy life here, or heartily Repent at last that they have neglected it : ” I have also clearly shewn, that the threatnings of future misery, against the *workers of iniquity*, as they are most dreadful and terrible; so they are most positive and peremptory, without any reserve or exception. Many, in pronouncing the awful and righteous Sentence of God, denouncing future misery to the workers of iniquity, seem to think it a *necessary* piece of *caution* to add (not, “ unless they repent in time and amend,” but) *unless they repent at last* : but the Word of God knows no such reserve, or *exception*; but constantly, without it, declares, that going on in a sinful course to the last leads to *unavoidable ruin*.

And, further to cut off *all* pretence of such exception : let it be observed, in the

Fourth place : That God expressly and peremptorily threatens, He will give a deaf ear to *their* cries *at last*, or in the day of
their

their distress and extremity, who refuse to hearken to His Calls in time: and, so far as a mere sorrow for an ill-spent life may be called Repentance; it is plainly intimated in Scripture, that there may be a real Repentance, a hearty Sorrow and Regret, too late; when the *time* for amendment and recovery is *past*.

There are plain intimations in Scripture, of such a thing as a sinner's *day of grace*; his season or opportunity for making his peace with God, and for securing and *working out* his *own Salvation*; which if he sins, or trifles away, the Door of mercy is shut upon him; and he has no access to retrieve the ruin he has brought upon himself: and no one sinner knows, how long this *day of grace* may last with him; or how near it may be to an end; if he refuses to comply with the *present Call* of God to *Repent and Believe the Gospel*: for this is certain, that *all* the Calls and exhortations in the Word of God, to Repent and to Believe in Christ, are to do so *immediately*, and *leave no encouragement to defer it one moment*.

“ Every one that is godly, says the Psalmist, shall pray unto thee *in a time* when thou *mayest be found*.” and, in like manner, the prophet exhorts sinners, *Is. lv. 6*. “ Seek ye the Lord (*viz.* by true repentance and amendment, as appears from the next verse) *while He may be found*;—plainly im-

plying, that there is *a time* when He *will not* be found : He has his *day of grace* and mercy ; but He has his *day of wrath* too : and they who “ despise the riches of His goodness, “ and forbearance, and long-suffering, not “ being led thereby to repentance ; do thus “ treasure up to themselves wrath against “ the *day of wrath*, and revelation of the “ righteous judgment of God.” *Rom. ii. 4, 5.* And the Apostle, *beseeching* those to whom he writes, that they “ receive not the “ grace of God in vain ;” says “ behold “ *now* is the *accepted time*, behold *now* is the “ day of Salvation.” *2 Cor. vi. 1, 2.* And “ the Holy Spirit saith, *to-day* if ye will “ hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” *Psf. xcv. 7. Heb. iii. 7, 8.* and the Apostle adds, *v. 13.* “ Exhort one another daily, “ *while it is called to-day*, lest any of you be “ hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” For the neglect of this their *opportunity*, our compassionate Redeemer *wept over* Jerusalem ; “ saying, if thou hadst known, even thou, “ at least in *this thy day*, the things which “ belong to thy peace ! but *now* they are hid “ from thine eyes.” *Luk. xix. 41, 42.* For this, the *foolish virgins*, in the Parable (*Matt. xxv. 1.*) could not *enter in* to the marriage-feast ; because they had neglected to improve their *time and opportunity* : they had neglected to make provision of *oil*, of inward graces and virtues, to keep the
lamps

lamps of their profession *alive*: and while they went, too late, to make provision (here they are represented not only as *regreting* the neglect, but attempting to *make it up*) the door was shut, and they were absolutely refused entrance. The Apostle, exhorting the Jewish Christians, *Heb.* xii. 15. 17. to “ look diligently lest any should fail of the “ grace of God ;” sets forth the danger of letting our *opportunity* slip, under the *example* of *Eſau*, “ who, for one morſel of meat ſold “ his birth-right ;” how inconfiderable a thing this ; in compariſon of foregoing the Heavenly birth-right, and Heavenly inheritance, for the gratifications of the ſenſual appetites, or of covetous or ambitious deſires ! And, He adds, “ ye know how that “ *afterwards*, when he would have inherited “ the bleſſing, he was rejected ; for he found “ *no place of Repentance*, though he ſought it “ *carefully with tears*.” And, the awful denunciation of the Divine Wiſdom, againſt obſtinate ſinners, *Prov.* i. 24. 31. is in very ſtrong and dreadful terms : “ becauſe I have “ called, and ye refused—I alſo will *laugh* “ at your *calamity*, and will *mock* when your “ *fear* cometh :—then ſhall they *call* upon “ me, but I *will not answer* ; they ſhall *ſeek* “ me *early*, but they *ſhall not find* me :— “ they ſhall eat of the *fruit of their own* “ *way*.” And, if to any ſinner this appears too *hard and ſevere* ; he may be addreſſed in
the

the words of *Bildad* to *Job*, xiii. 4. *Shall the earth be forsaken for thee? and shall the rock be removed out of its place?* “ Shall the wise
 “ course of Providence, and the sacred laws
 “ of the Divine government, be overturned?
 “ in favour of so guilty, so worthless, a
 “ wretch!” Sure, no truly pious and good
 soul can think such awful and salutary denunciations and warnings too hard and severe; nor think it an *unrighteous thing with God* to execute them, against those who will not be reclaimed by them; as he knows, and finds in his comfortable experience, that *Christ’s yoke is easy and his burden light*, and that *God’s commandments are not grievous*; and desires to be made *happy* in no other way, than the *way of Holiness*.

But, because some may pretend that the *threatnings* of future punishment to those who go on all their life in a vicious course, *must* admit of some reserve or exception; seeing there are *Promises* in the Gospel that run in a contrary strain; or, at least, must be considered as implying an exception to such threatnings: therefore, I undertake to prove; in the

Fifth place: that, there is no *one* promise, in the *whole word of God*, which gives the least countenance or encouragement to the hopes of those who go on in a sinful course, in the expectation of retrieving all at last, by a death-bed sorrow, and flying to the
 mercy

mercy of God in Christ Jesus in their last moments.

Here, it is natural to expect, the promises of salvation made to Repentance and Faith in Christ, will be alleged, in opposition to what I have laid down ; as there are no other promises that can, with any shadow of reason, be adduced to that purpose : *these*, indeed, the sinner, blinded by his lusts, is apt to understand as implying, “ that *one* act of
 “ sorrow or regret for an ill-spent life, at
 “ any time, even in the very *close* of it
 “ (falsely called Repentance) and *one* act of
 “ confident and presumptuous reliance on
 “ the mercy of God and the merits of Christ
 “ *then* (falsely called Faith in Christ) will
 “ retrieve all the ruin he has brought upon
 “ himself ; and effectually recommend him
 “ to the mercy of God unto eternal life.”

Thus, foolish and deluded souls *wrest the Scriptures to their own perdition* : and most basely and disingenuously improve groundless apprehensions of the Divine mercy and goodness, to harden them in vice, and encourage them to go on securely in a sinful course ; in the hopes of setting all to rights at last, by a late regret and dying sorrow ; especially, if it is very *deep* and strong, as they flatter themselves it will be.

But, that these Promises will admit of *no such* construction ; will be abundantly evident

dent from the following Considerations, seriously attended to.

1. That there are very good, and sufficiently Obvious, Reasons, why the promises of Salvation should be made to Faith and Repentance; without derogating in the least from the absolute Necessity of a Holy Life, to fit us for the Happiness of Heaven. Not to repeat what I have formerly said *, concerning the Terms of salvation declared and required in the Gospel: what I have *now* asserted will be abundantly evident; whether we consider the Calls to Repentance and Faith, and the encouraging Promises enforcing them, as they are first addressed to the heathen world; or, as they are extended to *all* sinners. The Promises of salvation to the Heathens, on their first abandoning their Idolatry and Vices, and receiving Christ as their Saviour and Lord; do *immediately* import, that they should be delivered from the darkness and misery of heathenish ignorance, superstition and idolatry, and brought into the privileges of the Christian Church; made partakers of all those advantages, for eternal Happiness, which the discoveries and institutions of the Gospel afford; and, by improving these, in the course of a holy and virtuous Life, should actually come to this eternal Happiness *at last*. But, as these Exhortations and Promises are still ex-

* See pag. 23, &c.

tended to *all* sinners, who hear the Gospel; and it is the Declared design of Christ's coming into the world, *Jo. iii. 16.* " that *who-*
 " *soever* believeth in him should not perish,
 " &c." For understanding the perfect consistency of this, with the absolute necessity of a Holy Life, in order to the happiness of Heaven; let it be observed; that God, who directly sees into the hearts of men, chiefly regards the Heart, in His service: true Holiness, chiefly lies in the purity of the Heart and the inward Affections of the Soul; which are the governing principles of our conduct: that which constitutes an Act, or Course, of true Obedience to God, is the inward good Principles from which it proceeds: and it is the prevalency of inward good dispositions of Heart, that lay the *foundation* of true happiness and enjoyment *within*. Therefore, it is most proper and natural, that the Promises of God, His Promises of Happiness, be made to those inward dispositions and affections, which are the true Principles of Holiness and Obedience to Him; rather, than to *any outward* Actions. If, then, true Faith in Christ is an effectual Principle of a truly virtuous Obedience; and true Repentance is the real and effectual Beginning of a holy and good Life; well may the Promises of that salvation and happiness, to the obtaining of which a Holy life is absolutely necessary, be made to *these*;
 with-

without, in the least, derogating from, or lessening, the necessity of Holiness: for these promises are not made to *them*, considered as *single Acts*; but, agreeably to their Nature, as effectual Principles of *all* those Dispositions, and that Course of behaviour, which is requisite to render us Meet for the Heavenly bliss: so that, *whatever*, in the nature of things and according to the tenor of the Gospel, is necessary to salvation, is either *included* in *them*, or naturally *flows* from *them* as the genuine and effectual Principles of it. Now, this is really the case: true Faith *purifies the Heart*, Acts xv. 9. the source of our Actions, *out of which are the issues of life*; *purifies* it from *all* sensual passions and *worldly lusts*, all narrow and selfish affections; and raises it to a Heavenly and Generous disposition; to that supreme Love to God, and hearty Good-will to all men, which are the natural principles of a regular performance of all the duties of Piety and Devotion, Equity and Goodness: thus, *Faith worketh by Love*, Gal. v. 6. the most commanding affection of the soul: it conveys into the Heart such a strong and lively sense of the Glory and the Goodness of God; of the Excellency of the Redeemer, and His condescending Kindness; as promotes in the soul the highest Love and Gratitude to our Gracious God, and Compassionate Saviour; with the sincerest Goodwill to our neighbours, in

imitation of that Divine Love by which we are saved : and thus leads us to the regular performance of every duty, from a principle of Love. Thus, true Faith renders the soul as a *good Tree* ; which naturally *bringeth forth good Fruit* : it lodges a *good Treasure* in the *Heart* ; from whence the *good man bringeth forth good things*. True Repentance (as it mainly consists in Amendment, and is constant and *not to be repented of*) is the proper and real Beginning of that *patient continuance in well-doing*, which leads to *glory, honour and immortality*. So that ; if we consider the *obvious reasons*, why the Promises of salvation are made to Faith and Repentance ; we may evidently see, that there is nothing in these promises, inconsistent with the plainest declarations concerning the *absolute necessity* of a Holy Life to the Happiness of Heaven : for justly may the promises of that Salvation, to which a Holy Life is absolutely necessary, be made to such Dispositions as are the real Beginnings and effectual Principles of such a Life. Therefore,

2dly : These Promises can, by no means, imply ; that the *first* Acts of Repentance and Faith render a man *immediately* meet for Heaven, come when they will ; even when they come early enough, to have the *best* influence upon us : for, it is by the Temper we improve in, by their *after-influence*, that we become meet to partake

of the Heavenly Bliss. As Repentance and Faith in Jesus Christ, are comprehensive and leading principles in true Religion and Christianity; sometimes these two are joined together in Scripture, as comprehensive of *all* that is required in order to our salvation; but by no means exclusive of a holy life, of which they are the Principles and beginnings: so, in the Preaching of our blessed Lord, *Mar. i. 15.* so also in the Preaching of the Apostle *Paul, Acts xx. 21.* Nay, sometimes *all* that is required to our Salvation, is comprehended under *one* of these: as, Repentance, *Ezek. xviii. 36.* Faith in Christ, *Acts xvi. 31.* But such passages are, by no means, to be understood, as if the *first act* of Repentance, or Faith, rendered a man *immediately* meet for the Heavenly bliss; or secured his *immediate entrance* into it: they can only imply (according to the tenor of the Gospel) his being assured of *coming* to Heaven *at last*; and of having the Time and opportunity, as well as the advantages and Assistances, necessary for *working out his own salvation*; which is *only begun* by the *first Acts* even of the most sincere Repentance and the most unfeigned Faith. That which seems to occasion the Error of many in this matter, is their having no notion of *being saved*, but *going directly to Heaven*; without any just notion, at the same time, *what Heaven is*, or what Improvements are necessary to make

us capable of so exalted a Happiness. Heaven is not so much a different *place* from that where we now are, as a Different *State* from the present; and it is by the *temper of our minds* we must make our *approaches* to it: nor is it even a *state* so quite different, but that there are the *beginnings* of it, going on and advancing upon Earth, in every true Heir of it; in his improvements in Love to God, and in a kind and equitable disposition towards all around him, to fit him for a state *wherein dwells righteousness*, and where *perfect Love* reigns. *Salvation* must be *begun*, and advancing *here*, to be *perfected hereafter*. To be *saved*, is to be *delivered* from pernicious Errors and delusions, fatal Mistakes concerning our happiness, and from vicious and corrupt affections; to have our minds more and more enlightened in the knowledge of the most important Truths, and formed to a Relish of true Enjoyment; to have our Hearts more and more purified from *all* irregular passions and vicious inclinations; and improved in Love to God and Divine things, and in Brotherly love and Charity: this *salvation* is not *perfected at once*; but from small *beginnings*, in the first dawnings of Divine Light and Love into the Soul, is *gradually* carried on and *improved*, to its Perfection in the Heavenly state. Now; if the Promises of Salvation, made to Repentance and Faith, do, by no means, imply

that the *first acts* of these render a man *immediately* meet for Heaven, or secure his *immediate entrance* into it; even when they come *early*, and the most ready compliance is given with the Divine Call *; far less, when they come *late*, in the *close* of a bad life; after the sinner has presumptuously, or carelessly, refused to comply with *many* repeated Calls of God; and thus is hardened in vicious *habits*, grown to an exorbitant pitch, and not to be *easily* or *speedily* conquered and subdued. Sure, no one can imagine any greater Excellency, or Efficacy, in a *late*, than in an *early* Repentance and Faith: on the contrary; an *early* and ready compliance with the Call of the Gospel, may naturally be supposed to carry a man further towards Heaven, than a *late* and reluctant one. Now; it is certainly one thing, to say, to a man in Life, “Repent and Believe “in Christ *now*; and you shall be saved; “and shall come to Heaven *at last*, by a “Life of Holiness:” and quite *another* thing to say, “if you Repent and Believe *at any* “time, however late, you shall be saved, “and go to Heaven *directly*, even without “a Life of Holiness.” I say, *now*; and to a man in Life: for, let it be carefully attended to, in the

3d place: That, as all the Calls of the Gospel to Repent and Believe, are to do so

* See above, pag. 25, 26.

now, without any delay; and the encouraging Promises of Salvation enforcing them, are only made to a *present compliance*: so, these Calls and Promises are *always* addressed to *men in Life*; and never once, in the whole tenor of Scripture, to *dying* men. This may, at first view, be greatly surprising to many: but the Fact is certain; that there is no *one* instance, in the whole Scripture, of such addresses as these, “ Repent, and turn
 “ from all your transgressions, and so ini-
 “ quity shall not be your ruin;” or “ Be-
 “ lieve on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou
 “ shalt be saved;” ever being directed to a person on a *death-bed*, or in visible danger of death: but these Calls and promises are *always* addressed to persons *in Life*, and likely to continue for some time in life; and who may, therefore, have time and opportunity, to carry on and improve the *good work*, begun by their *ready* compliance. We read of *one* person, indeed, (*Acts* xvi. 31.) to whom the great Call of the Gospel, enforced by the great Promise of it, was successfully addressed; who, a *little before* that, had been in immediate danger of dying, by his own hand too: but that *danger* was *quite over*, before this address was made to him; nay, before he conceived, or expressed, any concern about the matter. Now, this observation I am upon might *alone*, methinks, go a great way towards being *decisive* in the whole

Argument now under consideration. If the Call of the Gospel to Repent and Believe, with the promises of salvation to the *Penitent* and Believers, were ever, in Scripture, addressed to *dying* men; they might be reckoned to imply, *in these instances*, a Promise that, by some extraordinary and miraculous Grace, *they* should be made immediately meet for Heaven, and have an immediate entrance into it: and yet, *these* instances could not be drawn into a *precedent*, without a plain Divine warrant for it: but, as these Calls and Encouragements are constantly, and *only*, directed to men *in life*; the most that they can imply is, an assurance, upon a present compliance, of their coming to Heaven *at last*; and, consequently, of their having the time and opportunity, as well as the means and assistances, necessary for *working out* that *salvation* they thus enter upon. If *such* persons *readily* comply with the Divine Call; they may have a *probable* view of *time* to finish the good work begun, from the state of their health: a stronger assurance of it, from the goodness and consistency of the Divine conduct; whose very calling of men to *enter* upon a work, which in its nature is a *work of time*, implies that, upon their ready compliance, He will *give* them *time* for it: an *absolute* assurance, from the Promise of Salvation itself; which must include a promise of whatever is necessary, for carrying on,

on, and completing it. All this, it is plain, cannot afford the least encouragement to any sinner, to hope to get to Heaven, by any Repentance, or Faith he *can have*, at the close of a bad life; when he *can have no opportunity to work out that salvation*, which is *only begun*, even by the most sincere and the most early Repentance and Faith. And let us take this along with us; in the

4th place: That the Repentance and Faith, to which the promises of Salvation are made, are plainly described, in Scripture, to be such, as *actually* and in fact are the real beginnings of a holy and good life: so that, no Faith and Repentance which any sinner *can have* at the close of a bad life, *can* come up to these descriptions. If we advert to a variety of passages, concerning that Repentance and Faith to which the promises of Salvation are made; I may say, *all* the passages where their nature and influence is any way explained or described; we shall find them described to be such, as not only *would* produce a Holy life, if there was opportunity for it; but *actually do* produce it: and the reason may be obvious; because the necessary meetness and preparation for the enjoyments of a state of perfection, does not arise from what a man *would do*, in obedience to God and Christ, if he had opportunity; but from what he *actually does*; not from those improvements he *would* attain to, but from
what

what he *actually* attains this way. Particularly ; that Repentance, to which the promises of Pardon and Salvation are made, is never described as consisting in *meer Sorrow* for sin, however deep or bitter ; nor is Sorrow so much as declared to belong to it, *for itself* ; but rather *preparatory* to it, and requisite as subservient to the further purpose, of the Reformation and amendment of heart and life, in which true Repentance lies : remarkable, to this purpose, is that passage of the Apostle, 2 Cor. vii. 9—11. “ Now I
 “ rejoice, not that ye were *made* sorry, but
 “ that ye *sorrowed unto Repentance*, — for
 “ godly sorrow *worketh Repentance*, &c.” therefore, Sorrow itself is not Repentance ; but, even when it is most sincere, is only introductory to it ; and Repentance itself lies in that amendment, which a truly *godly sorrow* works. Another man’s grief and inward pain can, of itself, be no pleasure to a good and generous heart : and can *that* of itself, be acceptable to God, which can be no pleasure to any good man ? surely, God, who desires our happiness, can have no pleasure in our pain or grief ; but only so far as it is necessary, and of influence, to make us truly better. The occasion of the mistake of many, concerning this matter, seems to be this : in the common acceptation of the word, a man is said to *repent* of that which he is *grieved* for having done ; though that
 grief

grief has no farther effect: but, with whatever propriety this may be called *repenting* in common speech (though no man would believe, that one is heartily sorry he had wronged him, if he goes on to injure him still; and does not, in his after-conduct, do him good offices, if he can :) however, such a *fruitless sorrow* is not Repentance, in a Religious sense; not that Repentance which the Gospel requires, and to which it promises pardon and salvation; which, in all the descriptions of it, is declared to have its finishing and proof in actual Reformation and Amendment; and to be such as actually produces *newness of life*. I might adduce numerous passages of Scripture to this purpose: but these plain ones may suffice. Says the Lord, by the Prophet, *Isa. i. 16*. “Wash
 “ye, make you clean, put away the evil of
 “your doings—*cease to do evil, learn to do well*, &c. and *lviii. 5—7*. “Is this the fast
 “that I have chosen? a day for a man to
 “*afflict his soul*, &c. is not this the fast that
 “I have chosen? to *loose the bands of wickedness*, &c. is it not, to *deal thy bread to the hungry*,” &c. Again, *Ezek. xviii. 27*. true Repentance is thus described; “When
 “the wicked man *turneth away* from his
 “wickedness that he hath committed, and
 “*doth that which is lawful and right*, he
 “shall save his soul alive:” and, agreeably to this decision, the exhortation is, verses

30, 31. “ Repent and *turn from all your*
 “ transgressions; so iniquity shall not be
 “ your ruin: *cast away from you all your*
 “ transgressions—and make you *a new heart*
 “ and *a new spirit*, for why will ye die?”

In like manner, xxxiii. 14, 15. “ If the
 “ wicked *turn from his sin*, and *do that*
 “ *which is lawful and right*” if he “ *walk*
 “ *in the statutes of life, without committing*
 “ *iniquity*; he shall surely live, he shall not
 “ die.” And, in the following context,
 God puts the equity of His procedure upon
this footing; in opposition to those who said,
the way of the Lord is not equal. When *John*,
the Baptist, our Lord’s fore-runner, preach-
 ed Repentance, for the forgiveness of sins,
 this was *his exhortation*, Matt. iii. 8, 10.
 “ Bring forth *fruits meet for Repentance* :
 “ —every tree that bringeth not forth *good*
 “ *fruit* is hewn down, and cast into the
 “ fire:” which the Apostle, *Acts* xxvi. 20.
 expresses without a figure, when he says,
 that he “ shewed first unto them at *Damaf-*
 “ *cus*, and at *Jerusalem*, and throughout all
 “ the coasts of *Judea*, and then to the Gen-
 “ tiles, that they should Repent, and turn
 “ to God, and *do works meet for Repent-*
 “ *ance*.” And *Eph.* iv. 22—24. He thus
 describes true Repentance; “ That ye put
 “ off, concerning the former conversation,
 “ the old man, which is corrupt according
 “ to the deceitful lusts: and be renewed in
 “ the

“ the spirit of your mind : and that ye put
 “ on the New man, which after God is
 “ created in righteousness and true holi-
 “ ness.”

In like manner ; that Faith in Christ, to which the promises of Salvation are made, is not a *mere assent* to any doctrines ; nor a *confident* reliance on the mercy of God or the merits of Christ, without *complying* with the *terms* of the divine mercy in Christ Jesus : but, is such a receiving of Christ for our Saviour and Lord, as subjects the soul to His government ; gives Him the rule in the heart ; and leads on obedience to His laws, in the course of the life : it is described to be such a faith, as *purifies the heart*, and *worketh by love* ; as I have already shewn* : it is the principle of a Holy and Divine life. *Gal. ii. 20.* “ *I live*, says the “ Apostle, by the Faith of the Son of God :” and *Heb. x. 38.* “ The just shall *live* by “ Faith :” and *2 Cor. v. 7.* we *walk* by Faith.” Our blessed Saviour’s gracious invitation, *Matt. xi. 28, 29.* is, “ Come un- “ to me all ye that labour and are heavy la- “ den, and I will give you rest ; *take my “ yak upon you and learn of me*, for I am “ meek, and lowly in heart, and ye shall “ *find rest* unto your souls.” And *Jo. xv. 1—5.* He represents it as the genuine proof of our being engrafted in Him, as the *true*

* See pag. 60.

Vine, by a true and lively Faith ; that we *bring forth much fruit* ; i. e. do much good.

Now ; if that Repentance and Faith in Christ, to which the promises of Salvation are made, are plainly described to be such as *actually* are the real *beginnings* of a Holy and good life ; can such descriptions possibly agree to *any* Repentance and Faith a dying sinner *can* have in the *close* of a bad life ? whose Repentance, *perhaps*, amounts to no more than a cold, or, at most, a warm and passionate, *God have mercy upon me ; at best*, is a *meer* fruitless *sorrow* and regret ; tho', perhaps, rendered more passionate, by his present strong terror, and *fearful looking for of judgment* : whose Faith, like that of *Devils*, is a *meer* assent to Divine truths with *trembling* ; or, perhaps, so *cold* an assent as not even to be attended with trembling ; or such a confident reliance on the *mercy* of God, or *merits* of Christ, as may more justly be called *presumption* ! In fine ; in the

5th place : When once men, by sincere Repentance and unfeigned Faith, are engaged in a Christian course ; the constant strain of the exhortations of the Apostles to them is not only to *persevere*, but to *improve* in Holiness. The calls to Repent and Believe are constantly addressed, in the Gospel, to those who were not yet converted to Christianity, nor had taken on the Christian Profession : but to Christians, the exhortations

tions run perpetually on *walking in newness of life*, and *working out their own salvation*: the *Epistles* to Christians, who had already Repented and Believed, are full of the most pressing Exhortations to all virtue, and positive improvement in every thing praiseworthy; and constantly inculcate the indispensable necessity of a Holy and good Life: not, to Believe in Christ; but to *walk in Him*, as they had *received Him*: not, to Repent; but to make *progress* in Holiness, and *go on to perfection*: not only, to be *stedfast and unmoveable*; but *always abounding in the work of the Lord*; as knowing that, in this way and course, their *labour is not in vain in the Lord*.

Put *all* that has been said upon this Head together: and it will be abundantly evident; “ that there is no *one* Promise, in the whole
 “ word of God, that gives the least encouragement to the hopes of those who go on
 “ in a sinful course to the close of their
 “ lives: and that the Promises of Salvation
 “ made to Repentance and Faith in Christ,
 “ afford no manner of *exception* to this Assertion; nor do, in the least, derogate
 “ from the Absolute Necessity of a Holy
 “ Life to the Happiness of Heaven.” It is, certainly, *one* thing to say, to men *in life*,
 “ Repent *now*, and turn to God through
 “ Jesus Christ; and He will afford you both
 “ opportunity and Grace to work out your
 H “ Salva-

“ Salvation ; and, by a course of Holiness,
 “ you shall come to Heaven at last : ” and
 quite *another* thing to say, to a *dying* Sinner,
 “ Repent and Believe in Christ, and you
 “ shall go *directly* to Heaven ; ” or, to say to
 any man, “ if you Repent and Believe *at*
 “ *any time*, it shall avail to your Salvation ;
 “ even tho’ it be so late, that you have *no*
 “ *opportunity* to *work out* that Salvation,
 “ which the true Christian only enters upon
 “ by the *first acts* of the most sincere Faith
 “ and Repentance.” Neither of the two
 last can I find said in the whole Gospel.

But, perhaps it may be asked here ;
 “ what, then, if a sincere Penitent and Be-
 “ liever *dies immediately* ? shall he not go
 “ to Heaven ? or, shall any be Damned,
 “ who sincerely Repent and Believe on
 “ Christ ? ” But, it is plain there can be
 nothing straitening in this supposed Diffi-
 culty ; if there is no ground to reckon that
 the *Case supposed* ever happens in *fact* : which
 there is not : on the contrary ; there is good
 ground, from the Different, but perfectly
 Consistent, parts of the tenor of the Gos-
 pel, to be satisfied, that it *never does happen*.
 On the *one* hand ; salvation is promised to
 all who truly Repent and Believe in Christ :
 on the *other* hand ; a Holy Life is plainly
 declared to be absolutely necessary, and is in
 the nature of the thing necessary, to make
 us meet for the Heavenly bliss : therefore,
 we

we may clearly conclude ; that *all* who Repent and Believe unto Salvation, do it so early ; that, by the care of Divine Providence, they have opportunity afforded them for improving and carrying forward the *good work* thus *begun* ; nor are any, according to the declared tenor and Design of the Gospel, saved another way. And, it is only on this footing, that the truth of the common saying can be maintained ; that, *true Repentance is never too late* ; namely, because it is *always early* : from whence it plainly follows ; that, *late Repentance is*, not only *sceldom*, but *never true*.

But, still it may be alleged ; that though there are no Promises of Salvation, to the late Repentance of one who goes on in a sinful course to the last ; nor that are contrary to the necessity of a Holy Life in order to the Happiness of Heaven ; yet there are *Instances* to the Contrary : or, at least, there is *One Instance*, of a sinner accepted at last, and admitted to the Happiness of Heaven, upon a Repentance in his *dying moments* ; who had *all his life*, 'till then, gone on in a vicious and profligate course : and what *has* been, *may be* again. In opposition to this allegation, I undertake to make good ; in the

Sixth place : “ That there is *no one Instance*, recorded in Scripture, of that Repentance being accepted of God, or avail-

“ ing to an entrance into the Heavenly
 “ blifs, which was deferred to the laft ; or,
 “ had its beginning only in the clofe of a
 “ bad Life.”

To many, I am fenfible, it will appear a very great Paradox, to affert ; that there is not one Instance, to be depended upon, of any man's being accepted of God, or received into the happinefs of Heaven, upon a Repentance deferred to *the laft*. According to the common opinion, and in the judgment men make in Charity (as they reckon) concerning persons, when they are dead, who have gone on all their life in a vicious courfe, there are *a great many* fuch Instances : and were the accounts we have oft times delivered to us, with the Conclufions drawn from them, to be depended upon ; we might be induced to think, that the Heavenly manfions were hardly more filled with any fett of men, than with thofe abandoned wretches who, after going on all their lives in a loofe and flagitious courfe, are at laft brought, by their flagrant crimes, to a violent and ignominious death ! that the Heavenly City was greatly made up of fuch, as are unfit for, and unworthy of, any Society upon Earth ! But, it is not traditionary Instances, which we, or others, may form, by our good opinions or hopes, that we are to be ruled by, or take encouragement from ; but only Scriptural instances, which have the warrant of
 Divine

Divine Authority to support them. I would not be rash or forward, to check or restrain our having as good opinions and hopes concerning our neighbours, when they are gone, as we can entertain, in a consistency with the plain declarations of God's Word and Gospel: but I must observe, that the main Use of the exercise of our Charity, in entertaining a good Opinion of our neighbours, is towards those with whom we *live* and converse; and as for the Dead, with whom we are to have no further intercourse, there is no Necessity of our passing any Judgment concerning them at all; so that, if we cannot, agreeably to the Rules and Denunciations of Scripture, pronounce favourably concerning them, we may let them alone, and leave them to the Judgment of God: and, being too forward to express good hopes concerning *them*, oft times proves very pernicious to the *living*; by hardening them in their evil ways; and hindering one of the best and most necessary offices of Charity towards them, our using the most faithful endeavours to rescue them out of the most dangerous snare.

Now, this assertion, “ that there is *no* instance, in Scripture, of a sinner admitted to Heaven, upon a Repentance not begun ’till his last moments;” being a *Negative*, it is properly incumbent upon those who maintain the contrary to bring forth

their instances, and to support them; and the Negative admits of no other proof, than by examining any Instances that may be adduced, and showing that they are not to the purpose for which they are brought: if this be clearly done, the point undertaken must be reckoned sufficiently proved.

There is but *one* Instance, that can be pretended to be brought from Scripture, “ of a
“ sinner saved at last, and upon a Repent-
“ ance never begun ’till his dying mo-
“ ments.” For, whatever may be alleged from the Passage in *Mat. xx. 1.-16.* that passage is plainly a Parable, and is *not* related as *matter of fact*: a Parable, concerning which it is far from being certain, that it refers to the calling of *particular persons* to Repentance, at different periods of their lives; but it, more probably, relates to the Calling of the Gentiles into the Church of God, in the latter age of the world; and of several nations, in different periods of time, to equal privileges and advantages with the Jews, the ancient people of God: and, even supposing it did relate to the Calling of particular persons, at different times of their lives, to the service of God; it gives encouragement only to those, who comply with the *first Call* given them: and, with this *one* observation, borrowed from an excellent writer upon this Argument, I may dismiss the consideration of this Parable: that, even

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taken

taken in the view last-mentioned, it is so far from giving the least encouragement to a *late* and long-deferred Repentance; that it shows nothing more strongly, than the necessity of obeying the *first call* of God to Repent, and of diligence *in the service* of God throughout the whole remainder of life afterwards: the Persons latest called are chid, indeed, for *standing all the day idle*; but not in the *vineyard*, the Church; but in the *market-place*, which represents the state of those who are without the Church and not yet called by the Gospel; for they are represented as having it to plead, that *no man* had *hired* them; but *immediately* upon being called they *comply*, and are no more idle, but diligent in the service of the vineyard: the Parable represents *none* as refusing to go into the vineyard, when they were hired, or neglecting to labour in it afterwards; and at last *rewarded*, meerly for their *sorrow* at night for the wilful neglects of the whole day: and, therefore, affords not the least encouragement for the vain imagination, that the *late sorrow* (falsely called Repentance) of a Professed Christian, who has been an habitual sinner throughout the whole course of his life, will avail to his being an object of the favour of God, and an heir of Heaven, at last.

The *only instance*, then, that can be pretended to be brought from Scripture, of a person,

person, who had all his life gone on in a vicious course, being saved at last, and upon a Repentance not begun till his last moments, is that of *the penitent Thief*, who was crucified with our Blessed Saviour: so that, if this is plainly shown to be *no instance* of that nature, the careless and secure sinner must be deprived of the *only resource* he may hitherto have imagined remained to him, in the whole Word of God, to encourage his deferring his Repentance to the last, and yet entertaining hopes of Mercy and Salvation.

For my own part, I must frankly declare; that when, laying aside prejudices, I carefully and impartially consider that whole narrative, as it stands in the Gospels; I can see so little shadow of foundation for understanding it as an account of an “habitual
“sinner accepted and saved, upon a Re-
“pentance never begun ’till his last mo-
“ments;” that it has often been matter of wonder to me, how such a view of it has ever been first taken up; and not only greedily swallowed by the careless sinner, in order to the soothing of himself in his vain hopes; but also allowed, by some, who have shown the most earnest concern to guard against such a pernicious abuse of it.

It must be owned, that, even allowing that we had here *one* instance of an habitual sinner accepted at last, upon a Repentance in his dying moments, who *then* complied
with

with the *first call* to repent ; there is a vast difference betwixt such a case, and the case of a Repentance deliberately and presumptuously *deferred* till then : and still there remains enough to be said, and has been justly urged by those worthy Divines who have made that concession, to shew the unspeakable danger of *any other* sinner's taking encouragement from this *singular instance*, or thinking to draw it into a *precedent*. But these things I shall not repeat ; as to me there appears no occasion for them.

For I cannot help thinking, that whoever, without prejudice, impartially considers this Narrative, *as it stands*, will find *no one circumstance* in it, that gives the least foundation to take it for an account of the *first repentance* of an hitherto hardened sinner : and this must, in reason, be reckoned sufficient, to shew, that we have here before us *no such instance* as is alledged : it is not to be expected, nor is it necessary, that we should bring a *direct proof* of the *negative*,
 “ that this person had *not* been, in the former course of his life, an habitual sinner ;
 “ or, that the account we have here is *not* of
 “ the first beginning of his repentance : ”
 for, if the account here given does not at all, far less plainly and expressly, so represent the matter ; it is evident, that we have here *no scriptural instance* “ of an habitual sinner
 “ saved at last, upon such a late Repent-
 “ ance.”

“ance.” Had it been intended to give us
 here one instance of this sort ; it had been
 natural to have related the history in some
 such manner as this, that “ this man had
 “ been a person of a loose and abandoned
 “ character, and had led a vicious life, till
 “ by his crimes he was brought to a violent
 “ and ignominious death ; that he continu-
 “ ed hardened in sin to his last moments ;
 “ and then, without any other Repentance
 “ than rebuking his fellow-sufferer for his
 “ insolence, acknowledging the justice of his
 “ sentence, and the innocence of our Sa-
 “ viour (for no other are here mentioned)
 “ said to Jesus, *Lord, remember me when thou*
 “ *comest into thy kingdom :*” but it is plain
 the fact is *not so related* : nor is there any
 thing in the whole account before us, to lead
 us to think that this was the fact. Pray let
 us take a plain view of the whole *narrative*,
 as it may be fairly represented in *other* words,
 than these to which the tyranny of custom
 has affixed so strange a construction : it
 stands thus : “ among other circumstances
 “ of ignominy, which our blessed Lord sub-
 “ mitted to and endured, when, for our
 “ sakes, *He humbled Himself to the Death of*
 “ *the Cross*, this was one ; that *He was num-*
 “ *bred with the transgressors* ; and even dis-
 “ tinguished by superior disgrace, being cru-
 “ cified betwixt two thieves : the *one* of
 “ these was so hardened a sinner, that, a-
 “ midst

“ midst the pain and ignominy he himself
 “ so justly endured, and in the nearest view
 “ of death, he joined with the rude multi-
 “ tude and their *leaders* in reviling our blef-
 “ sed Saviour: the *other*, upon this inso-
 “ lence, in a warm and serious manner,
 “ gave him a just and reasonable rebuke;
 “ acknowledging their own guilt and the
 “ justice of their sufferings, and declaring
 “ the perfect innocency of Jesus; then,
 “ turning to our Saviour, acknowledged
 “ Him as *Lord*, and humbly begged to be
 “ kindly *remembered* by Him, when he should
 “ *come to the possession of that Kingdom to*
 “ *which He owned His title: upon which,*
 “ our blessed Lord graciously assured him,
 “ that he should that *day* be with Him in
 “ *Paradise.*”

Now, what is there, in all this Narrative,
 to lead us to conclude, that this person had
 been an *habitual sinner* in the former course
 of his life, before he committed that crime
 for which he was condemned; or that, since
 his committing it, he had *never* repented *till*
now? It is not, sure, his giving so just a
rebuke to his *fellow-sufferer*, for his insolent
 impiety! nor his giving such an honest *tes-*
timony to the perfect *innocency* of our Saviour!
 nor his making such an honourable *acknow-*
ledgment of Him, in the very view of all the
 ignominy of His cross; and making such
 an humble *petition* to Him! none of these,
 it

it is hoped, will be reckoned among the proper symptoms and marks of an hitherto *hardened offender*: is it, then, that he acknowledges the justice of his sentence; and owns that he, and his fellow-criminal, in suffering as they now did, *received the due reward of their deeds*? But, is such an acknowledgement, in reality, a certain mark of a sinner hitherto hardened in vice, and who had never relented till that moment? He is, indeed, said to have been a Thief; and to have been guilty of an instance of Theft, by his own acknowledgement, deserving the *gallows* (to speak in our^s stile): but, he may have been guilty of *no more* than *one* instance of that sort, for any thing that is said of him: will, now, *one* instance of crime deserving a violent death prove a man to have been, in the former course of his life, an habitual sinner; and never to have repented, till he is actually brought to his execution? Need I rake into the ashes of the dead, and bring upon the field the names of *eminent Saints*, who are set before us as Patterns with regard to the main of their conduct; who, yet, were so far left of God (for *their own* tryal and humiliation, and for *our* warning) as to be guilty of *particular instances* of crimes much worse, and of a more complicated nature, than any thing that appears, in the *scripture-narrative*, to be laid to the charge of this poor man?

Such

Such instances are sufficiently known; and are to be remembered as awful warnings, *let him that standeth take heed lest he fall.*

But it may be alledged, that the Evangelists (*Matt.* xxvii. 44. and *Mar.* xv. 32.) represent this man as joining, at first, with his fellow criminal, in reviling our blessed Lord; though afterwards, it would seem, he relented: and will not this be owned to be a mark of a *hardened sinner*? this, indeed, would look very bad, was it *plain* that the expressions of the Evangelists were to be so understood: but this is far from being the case. It is an obvious and just rule, for understanding the passages of the Gospel-history recorded by the Evangelists; “that, when
 “two, or three, of them relate the same
 “story, but *one* more particularly and distinctly than the others; the full account
 “of it is to be taken from that Evangelist
 “who relates it the most particularly and
 “distinctly.” Now the very same story, which the two Evangelists mention in *one* sentence (*Matthew* saying, “The thieves
 “also, who were crucified with him, cast
 “the same in his teeth;” and *Mark*,
 “They that were crucified with him reviled
 “him;”) *Luke* xxiii. 39. relates more particularly and distinctly thus; “*One* of the
 “malefactors—railed on Him, &c.—but
 “*the other* rebuked him, &c.” Nor do the *general* expressions in *Matthew* and *Mark*
 I oblige

oblige us to think, that the *intire fact* was any other, than as *Luke* distinctly represents it: for it does not appear to be their design to set forth the *number*, but the *character*, of the persons who thus insulted our Saviour, amidst his last sufferings; that he was basely insulted by persons of *all* characters, not excepting even such as were crucified with Him, and suffered justly while He suffered innocently, *one* of whom likewise upbraided Him, but was justly reprov'd by the *other*, as the Evangelist *Luke* particularly relates. And it is observed to be no unusual thing, in the stile of the Evangelist *Matthew*, whom *Mark*, for the most part, follows and abridges, that when two persons are joined together, and *one* of them speaks as in the name of both, what *he* says is said to be spoken by these persons; as we sometimes express it, “they spoke so *among them*.”

So that, from a fair and impartial view of this whole Narrative,

1. It does, by no means, plainly appear that this Penitent had ever been an *habitual* sinner, for any considerable time, in the former course of his life: there is not one bad thing said of him, in *all* the account we have in *Scripture* concerning him, but that he was guilty of an act of Theft, which, by his own confession, deserved a Capital punishment: and he may have been guilty but of *one* act of that kind, for any thing that is said, or insinu-

insinuated of him, to the contrary; though, speaking of himself and his fellow-criminal *together*, he says, “ they received the reward “ of *their deeds* ;” expressions which it is most natural to understand of the particular *crimes* for which each of them were condemned : this alone cannot be reckoned enough to prove, that he had been an habitual sinner in his former life : he might, for all that, have been an *early* Saint, and a very good man in the main ; and have led a very good life in his former days, for the most part : he may, for any thing we are told, have been surprized, through weakness, or tempted by want, to the crime he committed ; and have met with his just condemnation for the first, and the *only* instance of it he had been guilty of.

2. Even though it plainly appeared, that he had been an habitual sinner in his former life ; and had run into the Capital crime for which he was condemned, as the result of a preceding loose and abandoned course ; yet we have no ground given us to determine, that the application he here makes to our blessed Lord was the *first beginning* of his Repentance ; but may, as well, suppose, that he had begun it long before ; so as, by this time, to have arrived at a great height of piety and goodness : it may, for any thing we are told, have been a long time since he was guilty of the crime, before he suffered

for it; during *all* which time, he may have been going on in a course of sincere Repentance and thorough Amendment: and, if it *may* be so, for any thing we are *here* told; then it is plain, we have no ground *here* given us to reckon it was otherwise; and what *other* ground can we have for it? if the *Scripture* neither says nor hints, either, that this man had been an habitual sinner in his former life; nor, that this was the first of his Repentance; then, it is plain, we have here no *Scripture-instance* given us “ of
 “ a person, who had gone on all his life in a
 “ sinful course, saved at last upon a *late* Re-
 “ pentance:” and, if we will take the liberty to *supply*, or add to, any passage of Scripture, from our own fancies, or traditional prejudices; we may easily, that way, *wrest*, to our own destruction, any passages of Scripture whatsoever, even the plainest and most *easy to be understood*. But, tho’ this might suffice to the purpose I am upon; and tho’ adducing a *direct proof* of a *Negative* is a task no man can be fairly obliged to undertake; and, in most cases, impossible to be performed; yet, in the case before us, we may further observe,

3. That, even in this short narrative here given us of the character of this Penitent, and of his behaviour in his last moments, there are not wanting some *positive marks* of such a strength of virtue, as it is not natural
 to

to expect in a New Convert, who had been, 'till that moment, a hardened sinner : so that, not only have we *no* hint here given us, from which we might justly conclude, that he *had been* such a one ; but we have some *positive* evidences, from which we may, at least with great probability, conclude the contrary. It has been often said, “ that he *now* embraced “ *the first opportunity* of acknowledging Jesus “ as the *true Messiah* :” I see no evidence of this fact : but, if he did so, it was no more than *holy Simeon* had done before him ; and his doing it, in the manner he did, when that *Messiah* was in so *low* a condition too, is enough to show, that he was far from being a *Novice* in Religion ; but had attained a high pitch of freedom from those Vices and prejudices which oppose the Light. We can observe nothing, in the whole of his behaviour, like the *contrition*, sorrow or fears, of a man *conscious* to himself that, hitherto, he had been going on in a sinful course ; and pierced with the *conviction* that, to this moment, he was in a most dangerous state ; but, rather, like the *confidence* of an *improved saint*, of a man conscious to himself that he was in a good state, had been early converted, and had brought forth *fruits meet for Repentance* long ago : here's no *coming trembling*, with the *Yaylor*, and asking, *what shall I do to be saved* ; no down-cast looks, with the *Publican*, who *not* daring to *lift up his*

eyes to Heaven, smote on his Breast, and cried *God be merciful to me a sinner* : but, instead of all this, such a *confident*, tho' humble and honourable, application to Christ as this, *Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy Kingdom!* And, in this honourable acknowledgment, and humble application to our blessed Redeemer, amidst the lowest circumstances of the ignominy of His Cross, he discovers such an uncommon strength of Faith, and of *Virtue* and *Courage added to that Faith*, as it is by no means natural to suppose, a man who had hitherto been hardened in sin and impenitency would arrive at, *all at once* : he not only Believes in Jesus, but has the courage to make an Open Declaration of his Faith in Him, as Lord and King ; of a kingdom *not of this World* ; in which *he* should reckon it his happiness to be *remembered*, even *after his death* : and all this he does not only when he could have no manner of external encouragement to it ; but also while *all* outward circumstances, and the temper and behaviour of all about him, tended strongly to discourage him from it : our blessed Saviour was *now* lifted up upon a Cross ; distinguished by ignominy and disgrace ; delivered up to the rage and contempt of the people ; mocked by the Gentiles, and despised by the Jews ; *one* of his own Disciples had basely *betrayed* Him ; *another*, whom He had highly favoured, had,

with

with a strange mixture of Cowardice before men and Boldness with the name of God, shamefully *denied* Him (a crime far worse, and of a more complicated nature, than any this Penitent is charged with :) *all* the rest had *forsaken* him and fled : when our Saviour is thus brought to these lowest circumstances of abasement ; *this man*, amidst all the indignities thrown upon Him, openly acknowledges Him as Lord and King of the *invisible World* : in all which he discovers a strength of Faith, Love, and Heavenliness of mind ; not to be found, in the present circumstances of our blessed Lord, even in any of those Disciples who had been *long with Him* ! and, as a learned Divine observes, “ this poor
 “ man seems *now* to have engrossed *all* Pro-
 “ fession of the Faith, and to have made up
 “ the *whole* visible Church by himself ! ” Is this like a man hitherto hardened in wickedness ; and who had never begun to relent, ’till this moment ? But,

Enough has been said, and perhaps more than enough, to shew “ that we have here
 “ *no* instance given us, of a person saved at
 “ last, upon a Repentance begun in his
 “ dying moments, who had gone on all his
 “ life in a sinful course.” And, if the careless and secure sinner is thus deprived of the *only* instance he could pretend to bring, from the whole word of God, to support his hopes of obtaining Mercy at last, upon a late Repentance,

pentance, or dying regret for a *whole Life* spent in sin; let him no longer flatter himself with such *vain hopes*; but speedily *fly from the wrath to come*, by an immediate compliance with the Call of the Gospel.

And now, methinks, I have abundantly proved, that, as there is no *one* Promise, so there is no *one* Instance, in the whole Word of God, of any Exception to the plain and peremptory Declarations in the Gospel, of the Absolute Necessity of a *Holy Life* to the Happiness of Heaven; and that this Necessity is *without any reserve or exception*. I add, in further Confirmation of all this, if it can yet be thought to need any; in the

Seventh, and last, place; That the *Conduct* of our blessed Saviour, and His Apostles, in *Calling sinners to Repentance*, is perfectly agreeable to this Plan: and is absolutely *unaccountable* upon the supposition, that there is any room left, by the Tenor of the Gospel, for a sinner's being saved at last, upon a Repentance and Faith not begun 'till a Dying hour. I mean not, now, to speak of the *Doctrine* of our blessed Saviour and His Apostles concerning this matter; of which I have fully spoken, under the preceding Heads: but of something, in the *Conduct* of their Ministry, which is very remarkable to the purpose I am upon.

Our blessed Lord *came not to call the righteous*, indeed, *but sinners*; but then, He
came

came to call them *to Repentance*: and most diligent and indefatigable He was, in this His great work: but, how did he go about it? Why, by delivering His most important Instructions, Warnings, and Exhortations, to multitudes who flocked about Him, to attend upon His Ministry; and *always* to persons in Life; who might begin their Repentance, and enter upon a Religious course, in the reasonable hopes of making progress in it, and *bringing forth fruits meet for Repentance*. But, in *all* the pretty full accounts we have of His Personal Ministry, we never read of His dealing, for this purpose, with any persons on a Death-bed, or in their Last moments: nor so much as *one* instance that He, *who went about doing good*, ever visited *any* person upon a sick-bed, but to perform a Miraculous Cure; for which purpose too, He sometimes deferred coming, till the person was Dead. And, the like may be said of the Ministry of His Apostles; and particularly, of that great Apostle, who *laboured more abundantly than they all*.

This conduct must, certainly, appear very strange to many; as most inconsistent with their common prejudices: and, upon the principles of those, who think that a Death-bed Repentance is ever of avail to Salvation, it is absolutely Unaccountable. Had this been the Judgment of our blessed Saviour, *who was in the Bosom of the Father*, and to whom

whom *all things* were *delivered* of His Father; had it been the Principle of His Apostles, who had the *Spirit* given them *to lead them into all truth*; that Love and Compassion to immortal Souls, which, in *them* was so pure and fervent, must have prompted them with a double Ardour and Zeal, to lay hold of the Last opportunity of rescuing these precious Souls from Perdition, and bringing them back to God and to Happiness; an opportunity, too, that might seem attended with special advantages, while their convictions of sin were deep, and their fears of danger strong? What could hinder the *compassionate Physician* from pouring in the *balm* of the Promises and Consolations of the Gospel into such *wounded Souls*? What could hinder the *Good Shepherd* from attempting the *recovery* of such *strayed Sheep*? but the knowledge that it was, then, *labour in vain*! Nay, one may be apt to think, that even a conviction of its being to *no* purpose, would scarce be a sufficient restraint upon the compassion of a humane Heart; was not such fruitless tenderness towards *the dying* also judged of pernicious influence upon *the living*.

For my own part, the more I think upon this Circumstance, in the Conduct of our blessed Saviour and His Apostles, of the more Weight it appears to me in the present Argument. And,

If

If we lay all that has been said upon it together; methinks nothing is wanting to the fullest and most Abundant Evidence of this Important Principle; “ That a Holy
 “ Life is *absolutely* Necessary to the Happiness of Heaven; nor are any saved *in*
 “ *any other way than the way of Holiness.*”

From hence a conclusion might naturally be drawn in honour of Christianity; which has such a direct and powerful tendency to restore the Image of God in Man; to bring men back to the true Perfection of their Nature; to produce the Joys of Conscious Virtue and Integrity, and promote the Peace and Welfare of Human Society. But, this argument, of the Excellency and Divinity of our Holy Religion, is already fully treated by the most Excellent Pens.

UPON the whole of what has been said; how justly may we take up a Lamentation over the sad state and face of Religion in our day! alas! how grossly have many Professors of Religion degenerated from the Spirit of True Religion and Original Christianity; and substituted in its place, a sort of Religion and Christianity of their own making; which has no influence to mend their Hearts, to correct their Passions, or better their Lives? How many satisfy themselves with a meer Profession of Religion; kept up by a customary attendance upon Ordinances of Worship;

ship; or, perhaps, a flaming Zeal for their own particular Way, or Party? a Zeal, so far from being a *Zeal of good Works*; that it is rather of the kind the Apostle speaks of, (*Ja. iii. 16.*) as the parent of *confusion and every evil work*. There are many *all* whose Religion lies in talking about Religion; and even talking about things that have little, or nothing, to do with *real* Religion; in doubtful *disputations*, and *vain janglings*. Others please themselves with a Fanciful and Enthusiastical Religion; which, having no Influence to better their hearts and lives, can have no natural, or accountable Influence on their Happiness: *all* their Religion lies in *Extraordinary Manifestations of God*; not arising from an attention to the discoveries He has given of Himself in His Works and by His Word; but conveyed into the mind (as they imagine, or pretend) in a more Immediate way: in Enthusiastick Raptures and unintelligible Transports; whereby they are sometimes sunk into Despondency, they know not for what reason; at other times raised to strong Hopes and Confidence, they know not on what grounds: they attain to an Assurance of their Salvation; not flowing from comparing their *Characters and Lives* with the marks of an Heir of Heaven, plainly laid down in Scripture; but, either from *immediate Revelation*, as they fancy; or, a strong and presumptuous trust and

Confidence in Christ, and what He has done ; though they never *receive* Him, so as to *take* His *yoke* upon them and *learn* of Him. And, all the while, these *rapturous impressions*, and uncommon attainments, however *extraordinary* in their *nature*, have not so much as an *ordinary* influence to mend their hearts and lives : on the contrary, they swell their Pride ; puff them up into a vain conceit of themselves, as distinguished Favourites of Heaven ; a Confidence of the extraordinary Goodness of their Condition ; and a supercilious Contempt of much better Christians, as below their notice or fellowship ; like those of old, who said, *Stand by thyself, come not near me, for I am holier than thou*. Yea, nothing is more common with these Enthusiasts, exalted to such extraordinary attainments, than to condemn the Duties of *Social-life*, as *below* their concern, and no way conducive to the *working out* of their *Salvation* ; which *some* of them will tell you, “ is wrought out already to their
 “ hand ; or will be wrought out, of course,
 “ without their giving themselves any trou-
 “ ble about the matter, if they but Believe
 “ and trust strongly :” they Decry the Duties of Social Life, under the name of *Morality* ; as if *that* was a name to be used in contempt ! while the perfection of Moral Excellency is the great Glory of God Himself ; and a conformity to Him in it is the

greatest Dignity of our Nature, and the very thing which it is the great design of the Mediation of Christ to bring us back to ! How many, in place of that true *Faith* which *worketh by Love*, have substituted a sort of Faith which consists in a meer speculative Belief, or, perhaps, a regard to a meer *form of words*, without knowing the meaning of them ; or a presumptuous and vain Confidence ; a Faith, which has *no* influence on their Hearts and lives ; which *worketh not at all*, unless it be *as a Charm* ! How many, in place of that *Repentance from dead works*, which is the beginning of a Holy and good life, a Repentance *not to be repented of*, but shewing itself in bringing *forth fruits meet for repentance* ; have substituted a *fruitless Regret*, which works *no* Amendment at all ; and which they even consider as a thing Indifferent *what time* it comes, provided it be before they expire, even at the close and conclusion of a whole life spent in sin ! This, this, is One main cause, why many *deal* in the matters of Religion *with a slack hand*. And, indeed, when men once come to look upon Religion as a thing quite *abstract* from the *conduct of life*, and having *no natural* influence to improve us and make us meet for true happiness ; but only *some how* made necessary to the happiness of the *other world* ; if they imagine it a thing only *necessary* against they *come to die*, and for securing the

Happi-

Happiness of a *Future life*; but *no way* belonging to the Conduct or Comfort of *this life*, or our gradual Improvement in a Relish for the best Enjoyments; no wonder they put off *all* concern about it to *that time*, against which *alone* they apprehend it to be necessary. O that God, who alone can effectually reach the Hearts of all men, would awaken deluded sinners out of this thoughtless security; and rescue them from such a dangerous snare!

Of a piece with the rest of the gross practical Errors of many concerning Religion, is the Use they make of the Ministrations of those who are the Ministers of it. How many never knew any Use of a Minister of the Gospel *all* their days; but that he should mount his Pulpit at the stated times, and perform the usual Exercises there; and they should gather about him, and give their suit and presence; but without attending to any thing he says, either in Praying or Preaching, or minding it as of any great Importance to them? they had *no use* for his Assistance *all* their Life, to Instruct them, or excite them to their Duty, to Correct their mistakes, or direct them to Amend their faults; or, in a word, to do them any *real* service. But—is a New-born Child *weak*? does *mercy* (ever to be preferred to *sacrifice*) forbid bringing it to the Publick? why, *then* a Minister must be got, in all haste, to

perform a certain Ceremony upon it, which they call *Christening* it: what it *means*, they know not; but the thing *must be done*, not for the Instruction of the Parents, but to Save the *Infant* from *Hell*! “and what a
 “cruel man must he be, who will grudge
 “his travel for *such a purpose*, when a few
 “words of his mouth and motions of his hand
 “will do the business?” Strange, that ever men, under the advantages of the Light of the Gospel, should have sunk into such Notions of God and Religion! Again; how many, who never knew one reasonable Use of a Minister’s assistance *all* their days, nay, have often treated *all* his Warnings to *flee from the wrath to come* with the most hardened Contempt; yet, when Death stares him in the Face (or, when the like carnal and careless friends about them apprehend them to be at the *last gasp*) they think they are *quite ruined*, if they have not a Minister by them in their *last moments*; but perfectly *safe*, if they have His Prayers over them when they are *just expiring*: and therefore, *then* (and, for saving *needless* trouble, *not till then*) must a Minister be called, *in all haste*! and for what purpose? to instruct them, or awaken them; to direct, or advise them? no; they are *evidently past* all that: for what purpose then? why, to Comfort them: but, alas! what Comfort can we give to a *dying Sinner*, in his last moments; unless we will
 venture

venture to *ſpeak peace*, where God has ſpoke none; and ſend a poor creature *aſleep* and ſecure, or with *peace and ſafety* in his mouth, to a terrible awakening? not to ſay, that he is *then* even *paſt* receiving Conſolation from us, if we had any to give him: for what, then, are we called? why, to *pray over him*, or, as many very groſſly expreſs it, to *pray to him*! what is this, but turning our Miniſtrations and Prayers into *Charms*! to ſeek them with as much ſuperſtition, and to as little reaſonable *purpoſe*, as the poor deluded Papiſts ſeek *Extreme-Uncti-on*! as if we carried a *Paſſ-port* to Heaven in our *Pockets*; or could *open* its *Gates* to a *dying ſinner* by our *Breath*!

Nay, were Miniſters even called ſooner, than they commonly are, to *ſinners* on a *death-bed*; it would not much mend the matter. I have already ſhewn, “ that the great
 “ Call of the Goſpel to Repent and Believe
 “ in Chriſt, with the encouraging Promiſe
 “ of Salvation enforcing it, are conſtantly
 “ addreſſed, by inſpired Preachers; to *men*
 “ *in life*; and never, in the whole Word
 “ of God, to *dying men*: and, that our bleſ-
 “ ſed Saviour, and His Apoſtles, in calling
 “ Sinners to Repentance, are never repre-
 “ ſented as dealing with any perſons, for
 “ this purpoſe, in their *dying moments*: nor
 “ is there any one Precept, to the Mini-
 “ ſters of Religion, either under the Old

“ Testament or the New, to address such
 “ Exhortations and Promises to the Dying,
 “ more than to the Dead.”

Now; if there is neither Precept nor Example, in Scripture, for saying, to any Person on his Death-bed, “ Repent, and iniquity shall not be your ruin;” or, “ Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shall be saved:” the Conclusion may be obvious enough, however strange it may appear; “ that, on *no* warrant of *Scripture*, can “ we say, to any *dying sinners*, *Repent, and “ Believe, and You shall be Saved.*” This may appear strange to many; because it is contrary to common opinions, and prejudices taken up without any foundation; and not from any thing unreasonable in the thing itself: but, it is a plain Conclusion, from an unquestionable Observation of matter of Fact. We may, indeed say to them, that “ to Repent “ as they *can* is the best thing they *can then* “ do; as thereby they may do some small “ Honour to God and His Law; and may, “ this way, give some charitable Warning “ to Surviving Friends, not to tread in their “ Steps:” nay, we may further, from the Nature of the thing, and the general Evidence of the Mercy of God, say, that “ it “ shall be *more tolerable* for them, if they “ *die Relenting*, than if they *die hardened* in “ wickedness:” but, that is *all* the length we

we can go: there is *no* Promise, *no* Hope, of Salvation given them by the Gospel.

Visiting the Sick, so as to *Minister* help to them in their distress, is, indeed, a *common* Act of Mercy, and Christian Charity; and will come into the Account of the great Day*: but there is *nothing* in it *peculiar* to the Office of Ministers of the Gospel; for, in *all* the instructions concerning our Ministrations (which, blessed be God, we have pretty Full and Particular, especially in the Epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus*) there is not *one* Syllable concerning our attending on *Malefactors* to a *Gibbet*; or attending on *any persons* in their *last moments*: nor any mention of visiting persons on a Sick-bed *at all*; except that Direction†, plainly peculiar to the Age of Miracles, of the *Elders of the Church* being called, to *anoint with oil in the name of the Lord*, in order to a miraculous Cure by the *Prayer of Faith*.

If all this is plain Fact, it is very remarkable; as it runs quite cross to the Opinion, too common among us, “that the great use of Ministers to People is in their *dying moments* :” for, from these observations it plainly follows, that, as to *all* this matter, “of attending upon persons on a sick-bed, or in the approach of Death,” we are left to what the Reason of the thing, agreeably to the general tenor of Scripture-

* *Mat.* xxv. 36. 45.

† *Ja.* v. 14, 15.

Revelation, may dictate; which will shew us, that our Assistance may be very useful, and a most agreeable part of our Office performed, towards *dying Saints*, while they are *capable* of receiving Instruction, or Encouragement, from us: *they* may, in that *gloomy hour*, stand in need of *all* the Assistance, or Encouragement which Ministers or Christian Friends, whose minds are more at ease, can give them, in wrestling with their *great* and with their *last Enemy*; and *they* will call for our Assistance, while they *can* make use of it: but of what use our attendance on *dying Sinners* can be, especially when they are *past* bearing any thing we *can* say (the ordinary time that we are called, in all haste, to them) for my part I cannot see; unless it be, to *strengthen the hands of the surviving wicked, that they should not return from their wicked way by promising them life!* (Ezek. xiii. 22.) doing what is too liable to that construction; and what many *will* understand so, notwithstanding *all the Cautions we can* give them against putting that construction upon it.

In after-times of the Christian Church, indeed; when Christianity began to be turned into a set of *Forms*, and *Ceremonies*, and *Charms*, instead of “*Living by Faith in the* “*Son of God;*” then, as Superstition crept in, and gave a notable handle to the Covetous *designs* of the Clergy, which the *dying moments* of the Laity were found the fittest seasons

seasons for accomplishing ; *then* a great deal of work is made about our *dealings* with persons on a *sick-bed*, or a *death-bed* : and part of these dealings came to be the turning some of the sacred Institutions of Christianity, appointed for a solemn *reception* into the Church *militant*, or for the *perfecting* of *living saints*, into Charms for the benefit of *dying sinners*, or a *passport* into the Church *triumphant* ; for those, *viz.* who had money to leave, or their friends enough to give, to the Church, *i. e.* the Clergy ; and the turning that *extraordinary* Unction, appointed for a mean of Cure and recovery, into an *ordinary* Unction, of persons whose *recovery* is *despaired* of, for the *forgiveness* of *sins* ; a favour only to be obtained by sincere Repentance and Faith in Christ, *working by Love* and actually producing *new obedience*.

But, we know, *the Mystery of Iniquity already wrought*, (2. *Theff.* ii. 7.) even in the days of the Apostles, and very early *then* too : no wonder, then, that it wrought very strongly afterwards ; so as, in process of time, to pervert almost the whole Religion of Jesus ; and substitute in the place of its genuine Institutions, a system of Tricks and Charms, contrived to frustrate and make void its main Design, of restoring and promoting true Holiness and goodness among men. And in nothing is the Spirit of Popery more conspicuous, than in those wretched *arts* of *self-deceit*

deceit it leads sinners to trust to, under the daring attempt of imposing upon Almighty God, by certain Compensations substituted in place of a good Life, and that *Holiness without which no man shall see the Lord*: sometimes *compensations in money*, sometimes in *ceremonies and tricks*. Take along, with these *arts of cheating* ourselves and trifling with the Great God, the turning Christianity into a Scheme of Worldly Policy; and you have the whole great out-lines of the Spirit of Popery: which, by these lineaments, plainly enough appears to be the Spirit of *Antichrist*.

But, to return from this Digression, if it may be reckoned one; from all that hath been said upon this head, it is plain; “ that
“ the business of the Ministers of Christ is
“ not so much with *dying men*, as is too
“ commonly imagined.” Our business is chiefly with men *in life and health*: to whom, if we can happily persuade them to *be reconciled to God*, we may, upon Scripture-warrant, promise *time and opportunity* for *carrying on the good work* thus begun.

And, O! that we could persuade people to use our assistance *in time*; and to improve our Ministrations for the great and valuable purpose of them! O! that I might *now* be so happy, as to persuade sinners effectually to *know*, and to mind, *in this their day*, the *things that belong to their peace*!

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It may perhaps be alleged, that the tendency of what I have been all along saying, is to drive people to despair. But, whom? If even there should be a mistake, in what, I think, I have given the clearest and fullest evidence of Scripture for; “ that a *dying* “ *sinner* is, by the tenor of the Gospel, cut “ off from all hopes of Salvation, upon “ any Repentance he can have in his last “ moments :” the driving of *dying sinners* to despair, is not so great a harm as it may be apprehended; at least, it can be no *lasting* one: if God, by any such *extraordinary* way (as I think the Gospel excludes) has made them meet for the Heavenly bliss; certainly none shall be excluded from it, merely for having, in the Agonies of a Death-bed, despaired of it, if he is not, in other respects, a *vessel of wrath fitted for destruction*.

But, as the tenor of the Gospel leaves no room for the expectation of so extraordinary a change *then*; certainly, for those who have, all their lives, gone on securely in a sinful course, and hardened their hearts against all God’s gracious Calls and encouraging invitations; for such, I say, to *die* in *Despair*, is better, both for themselves and others, than that they should *die* in presumptuous *Hopes*: far better, for multitudes of surviving sinners; if they are happily brought to improve, in time, the awful Warning! and even better for themselves; as the punishment awaiting

ing them must fall with the less weight, amidst a *fearful looking for it*; than if *sudden destruction*, which they cannot escape, comes upon them, while they are, vainly, saying to themselves *peace and safety*. But, surely, nothing that I have said tends to drive any of you to Despair, who are in life and health, and who yet hear *the joyful sound* of the Gospel: though it may be a necessary warning to those who have gone long, or far, on in a vicious course; that their case is likely to be *now* betwixt Hope and Despair; as they give, or defer, a *present* compliance with the Call of the Gospel. But, to *all* of you I can say, upon the warrant of God's word and Gospel, if you will *now* “ Repent, and turn
 “ from all your transgressions, iniquity shall
 “ not be your ruin:” if you will *now* “ Be-
 “ lieve on the Lord Jesus Christ, and come
 “ unto God by Him, and enter heartily
 “ upon a pious and good life;” you shall have your *fruit unto holiness*; shall enjoy, even here, the present fruits of *peace and pleasure in all the ways of wisdom*; and your *end* shall be *everlasting Life, through Jesus Christ our Lord*: at the same time; if you refuse to comply with this *present* Call of God, and trifle away the *present* Opportunity; no man on Earth can assure you, that it shall not be *your last*: therefore *to-day, if you will hear God's voice, harden not your hearts!* lest you be irrecoverably hardened by
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the deceitfulness that is in sin; and provoke God to pass an irreversibile sentence against you, that you shall never *enter into His Heavenly rest*! “Behold *now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of Salvation.” How long will you delay and put off a work of the greatest Labour, and, at the same time, of the greatest Importance and Necessity? Have you not too long delayed it already? and is it not *now* high time to set about it in good earnest? While you may *now* make sure of Eternal Life; will you run the most desperate risk of losing it? *It is not a vain thing*, Sirs, *for it is your Life*: Your All is at stake; and will you still, in the most trifling manner, play it away? May not *the time past* of your life *suffice you*, more than *suffice you*, to have walked in the ways of folly and vanity; and abandoned yourselves to the conduct of *deceitful lusts*? Can you *too soon* begin a happy life? too soon forsake the paths of Darkness and misery; and enter upon the ways of light and joy? Those ways, in which alone you can *know* true peace of mind, or the true enjoyment of life.

Why, indeed, should it be necessary to make use of the awful *terrors of the Lord*, to *persuade* you to your *present happiness*? Suppose the Necessity of a *speedy hearkening to God's voice*, in order to the happiness of the *ether world*, was not *so great* as I have shown

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it to be: nay, that the way to Heaven lay *as open* by a *late Repentance*, as by a *course of Holiness*; that it was as *easy*, and as *ordinary*, to come at it the *one* way, as the *other*: yet, what a source of quiet and tranquillity, throughout your whole life, must it be, to reflect, that your greatest and most important work is not yet to begin; but is happily going forward!—What pleasure, joy and peace, for the *present*, in a Religious and virtuous course, do you *irrecoverably* lose; so long as you defer entering upon it; even though you was ever so sure of saving your souls *at last*!

It must certainly, sinners, be some violent Prejudice against the ways of Holiness, struggling with your natural Love of happiness, that makes you put off and delay that Repentance, which you own to be absolutely necessary to your escaping *future misery*, and coming to the Happiness of the *other world*: but, how groundless are such prejudices! God's *commandments are not grievous*: the service of sin is the vilest, and the most grievous, slavery; but the service of God is the most perfect, and the most glorious, Liberty: Christ's *yoke is easy*, and his *burden is light*: wisdom's *ways are ways of pleasantness*, and all her *paths are peace*: tho' there was no *future happiness* provided for those who keep God's commandments; there's a great enough *present reward*, in the *keeping of them*,

to allure you to it ; were but your eyes open to discern it ! What are *all* the pleasures of *sin* (were they even as lasting, as they are but *for a season*) compared to the transcendent delights and satisfactions of Piety and Virtue ! to the Joys and triumphs of a soul in which universal Love reigns, and bears the sway over all other affections and passions ! a soul who, *dwelling in Love, dwelleth in God, and God in him* : who feels that delight in Love, and in the God of Love ; that satisfaction in the thoughts of God, and in the sense of His favour ; that joy in uprightness ; that peace in a good Conscience ; that satisfaction and tranquillity in a well-governed mind, and a well-ordered conversation ; which unspeakably exceed *all* the flattering allurements of the world, and the highest gratifications of sense !

Are you quite lost, sinners, to *all* sentiments of Ingenuity, or Gratitude ! Can you refuse your Love *one moment* to the most excellent and Amiable Object ? Can you indulge yourselves *one moment* longer, in a course of Ingratitude to your greatest Benefactor ; who, in courting your Love, courts you to your own Happiness ; allures you, by a profusion of Benefits, even while you are Rebelling against Him ; and by the prospect of far greater Blessings, beyond your present conceptions ; and all, to persuade you to that which, in its own nature, is Best for

yourself; has the most direct tendency to your *present* tranquillity, and to the truest enjoyment of a *present* life! Have you not always found the pleasures of sin mixed and chequered with pain and remorse? and must you not always find them so, while your Consciences are not *seared* as with a *hot iron*; and even then too, while it is the unchangeable nature of irregular passions to give Disturbance and Disappointment? Can, then, these muddy pleasures of sin be once worthy to be compared with the pure Joys of Divine Love, and Friendly Affection; the tranquillity and sweetness of a pure breast; and *the Peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeping the heart and mind!* Can you deliberate *one moment*, in such a Choice! If you knew God, and had any sense of Heavenly Joys; could you possibly fear *loving Him*, or setting your Hearts upon them, *too soon!* Reflect seriously on the follies, disappointments, and dangers of your past conduct; that you may be awakened to an earnest concern to run no more such desperate risks: *what fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.*

But; let not the thought of what you have been, and done, drive you to Despondency; or make you Despair of doing better, or of being Accepted of God: say not, *there is no Hope!* Our God is a merciful
 God;

God ; and His *grace is sufficient for you* : there is *Joy in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth* : our compassionate Redeemer will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax : He has declared that *him who cometh to Him, He will in no wise cast out* : God is more ready to receive returning Sinners into favour, than they are to return to Him ; yea most ready to encourage and forward their weak (if sincere) attempts to return to Him : behold the true Image of our Heavenly Father, in the Father of the *Prodigal*, in the Parable, *Luk. xv.* observing him, in his return to him, while he was *yet a great way off*, with an eye of *compassion* ! running to meet him ! and receiving him with the most endearing tenderness !—Hear the joyful sound, sinners : “ *As I live*, saith the Lord “ God, I have no pleasure in the death of “ the wicked, but that the wicked turn from “ his way and live : turn ye, turn ye, from “ your evil ways ; for why will ye die ? ” Harken to the glad tidings brought us by the Apostles of our Lord and Saviour : “ God was in Christ reconciling the world “ unto himself, not imputing their trespasses “ unto them ; and hath committed unto us “ the word of reconciliation : now then, “ we are ambassadors for Christ ; as though “ God did beseech you by us ; we pray you, “ in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to “ God : ” let the discoveries of this tender
mercy

mercy gain your hearts, sinners, and *lead you to repentance*: lay hold of the encouragement offered to you: *come unto God by Christ Jesus: come unto Christ*; and he *will give you rest*: *take his yoke upon you, and learn of Him, and you shall find rest unto your souls*: “ if the son make you free, you shall be
 “ free indeed: and, being free from sin,
 “ and become the servants of God, you shall
 “ have your fruit unto holiness, and the end
 “ everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our
 “ Lord.”

But, I cannot think of leaving this Argument, without some proper Application of what has been said upon it, to those who, by a timely Repentance and Faith in God through Jesus Christ, have happily entered upon a Religious and virtuous life. I may content myself, with referring you to what I have said in the beginning of this treatise, concerning the improvement you may make of this Argument for your Comfort *: as I have also *there* pointed at the improvement you are to make of it for your excitement to your Duty †. Rest not, then, satisfied with any thing you have yet attained to in Religion; but be still *following after* further improvements: “ leaving the principles of
 “ the Doctrine of Christ; let us go on unto
 “ perfection:” not only “ be stedfast and
 “ unmoveable, but *always abounding* in the

* See pag. 4. † See also pag. 28, &c. and 72.

“ work of the Lord : grow in grace, and in
 “ the knowledge of God, and our Saviour
 “ Jesus Christ : ” constantly aspire after the
 greatest Perfection of Holiness and goodness.
 And now, to animate and direct your efforts
 this way, I shall set before you some Cha-
 racters of the *Improved*, or (in the stile of
 Grace) the *Perfect Saint* ; whereby He is
 distinguished from those who are *weak in*
Faith, Babes in Christ, and unskilful in the
word of righteousness. They are these : the
purity of the Principle whence His obedience
 flows : the *intenseness and vigour of the heart*,
 in the performance of Duty : *uniformity*, as
 to the several Branches of Piety and Good-
 ness : *constancy and steadfastness*, in opposition
 to fickleness and wavering : continual *aspir-*
ing after the utmost perfection in Holiness :
 and, to crown *all*, a growing *Humility*.

1. The *purity of the principle*, whence
 His obedience flows. The *improved*, the
perfect, Saint obeys God, as the Best Master,
 not from a principle of *slavish fear* ; or, for
 the sake of Rewards foreign to the Pleasure
 of His service ; but from *Love* to Him and
 to His service itself. The supreme Love of
 God, for the perfectly amiable Excellencies
 of His Nature, is the prevailing disposition
 of his soul : a Love which pursues no other
 enjoyment, than the satisfaction of *beholding*
 and *resembling* the beloved Object. He rises
 superior to all *sensible and earthly images of*
 4 the

the Heavenly glories and joys; and enters into *direct* views and *fore-tastes* of the real enjoyments above; *beholding the Divine glory*; being *satisfied with His likeness*, and with the most full sense of His Favour: this is the *Heaven* he seeks: the worst Hell he dreads, is to be banished for ever from God's blissful *presence*; and therefore, he has a hearty abhorrence of every *departure from the living God*. “The Law of his God is in his Heart: he rejoices in the *way* of His testimonies;” as well as in the *end* it leads to: his Duty, far from being the *task* and *burden*, is the *joy* and *comfort* of his life; and he would chuse it, as such, though he had no life hereafter to look for, or could be sure of coming to it a shorter way. Hence arises,

2. The *intenseness* and *vigour* of his heart, in the performance of Duty. His Devotion is strong and lively: his brotherly Love fervent and active. In *Prayer*, he *pours out his heart before God*: he obtains an ease from his burdens, by *casting them upon the Lord*, who *cares for him*: he derives a cheerfulness to his soul, to set about every duty, from his calling in All-mighty aids: he gives the strongest vent to the feelings of his generous Heart, in *intercessions for all men*; recommending them to His care who can make *all blessings abound* to them. He *Praises God*, with *joyful Heart and Lips*: the inward *melody* of

of praise is delightful to his soul. He rejoiceth in God's *Word*, as one that findeth great spoil. He remembers His wonderful Love in our Redemption, with returns of the highest Love and Gratitude; and the purest Charity, animated by the Divine Example. He *does good*, as he has opportunity, to all men; and does it with the most hearty good-will: he is *zealous of good works*; and has it for his *meat and drink to do the will of his Heavenly Father*. Hence flows,

3. *Uniformity*, as to the several branches of Duty. He has a "respect to all God's commandments:" he "cleanses himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit;" "perfecting Holiness in the fear of God." He regularly performs the duties of Divine Worship; from a prevailing regard to the valuable Purpose of them, his improvement in a conformity to God in that Moral excellency he adores. Nor does he think, he is then only employed in the Service of God, when he is going about the Duties of immediate Worship; but reckons he exercises Devotion, for the valuable Purpose of it, when, from an habitual regard to God, he goes about the duties of his honest Calling in life, and of the several Stations and Relations in which he is placed, so as to please and resemble Him, who *exercises loving-kindness and righteousness in the Earth, and delights in these things*. Even his *diversions are sanctified*,

fixed, in their *intention*; and are made subservient to his more important employments. He is *holy in all manner of conversation*.

4. He is *constant* and *steadfast* in the ways of goodness. He has got, in a good measure, above these Temptations that formerly turned Him aside; so that they even cease to be temptations to him: he disdains the low gratifications of sense, that come in competition with the superior Joys of a good Heart: he despises the *gains of unrighteousness*; reckoning that *one grain of inward worth* excels them *all*: he contemns the *honours* that are of men only; having his heart set upon that *honour which is of God*: welcome to him the losses and troubles of this life; when ordered for him by the Wisdom of his Heavenly Father (he knows) for *his good*: he *glories* even in *tribulations*; *knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope*, even that *hope which maketh not ashamed*: Rom. v. 3, &c. *for this cause* he fainteth not; but *though the outward man fail, the inward man is renewed day by day*. This is another Character of the *perfect man*:

5. He continually aspires after the *utmost perfection* in Holiness: his Love to the untainted perfection of Holiness and goodness, in the blessed God, animates him to aspire after the utmost Resemblance to Him: he studies to *be perfect*, as his *Heavenly Father*

is perfect : forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before ; he presses towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And,

6. All is beautified and adorned by a growing Humility. The further he goes, in Vital Religion ; the more he is sensible of the exceeding breadth of God's Commandment *, and of his own imperfections and defects : the improved Saint has a stronger sense of the odiousness of those sins of infirmity, which still cleave to him ; than he formerly had of grosser acts of wickedness ; as the smallest spots, on a clear and bright Mirror, do strongly appear. Former experience has thoroughly convinced him, that he has no foundation of security in himself : and therefore, he exercises a constant humble dependance on the grace that is in Christ Jesus ; and whatever he does, does all in His name ; giving thanks to God and the Father by Him. He heedfully watches over his own heart ; and is constantly on his guard against those remains of irregular passions and appetites, which he still finds there : under these he groans, being burdened ; and longs for the day, when he shall put off this earthly Tabernacle ; shall get loose from this vain World ; shall shake off these fetters ; and his freed Spirit shall be with God, and the glorious

* Ps. cxix. 96.

Redeemer ; with *the innumerable company of Angels and the Spirits of just men made perfect*, to share in *their* perfection and joy, and bear a part in their Heavenly Melody.

What an Amiable Character does this appear, even in the rudest Draught of it ! how well worth our *reaching forth* to ! and what is there, in *all* this, but what a Christian, by Divine Grace, in a way of faithful watchfulness and constant efforts, may attain to ? At the same time, how far do the *bulk*, even of sincere Christians, come short of it ? how sensible will the *best* of them be that they do so ? but, however far behind, we may *follow after*. Let it be your single aim, Christians, in the use of *all the means of grace*, to become Perfect in Holiness. Do not despise or neglect any of those *means* which the Wisdom of God has prescribed to You ; nor vainly reckon Yourself above them : neither rest on the most diligent attendance upon them ; without a prevailing regard to the great End of them, Your improvement in Divine Knowledge and true Goodness. Exercise a constant humble Dependance upon *the God of all grace* ; and make frequent and earnest applications to Him by Prayer, *in the name* of the blessed Mediator, for His necessary Aids : make these *humble* applications, too, with a joyful *confidence*, “ that He, who
 “ hath begun a good work in You, will
 “ perform

“ perform it until the day of Jesus Christ :” be not discouraged ; nor think that the heights of Devotion and Goodness of a *perfect Saint* are too high for You to aspire after : do not sit down, making lazy complaints ; or lay Yourselves open to *discouraging Spies* of the *Heavenly Canaan* ; nor prove such to Yourselves : do not measure the power of Divine Grace, or the heights a Vigorous Saint may reach to, by the languid carelessness and inactivity of very *imperfect Saints*, if they may be allowed to be *Saints at all* ! give not way to despondency ; but up, and be doing, and the Lord will be with You. The further You go on ; the more will You *find*, that Christ’s *yoke is easy* and his *burden is light* ; the more will You *feel* of that *peace and pleasure* which is in *all the ways of Wisdom* : and thus will Your *path* be *as the shining Light*, that shineth more and more unto the Perfect Day.



*Charity the End of the Commandment ;
or, Universal Love the Design of
Christianity.*

A

S E R M O N

Preached at the

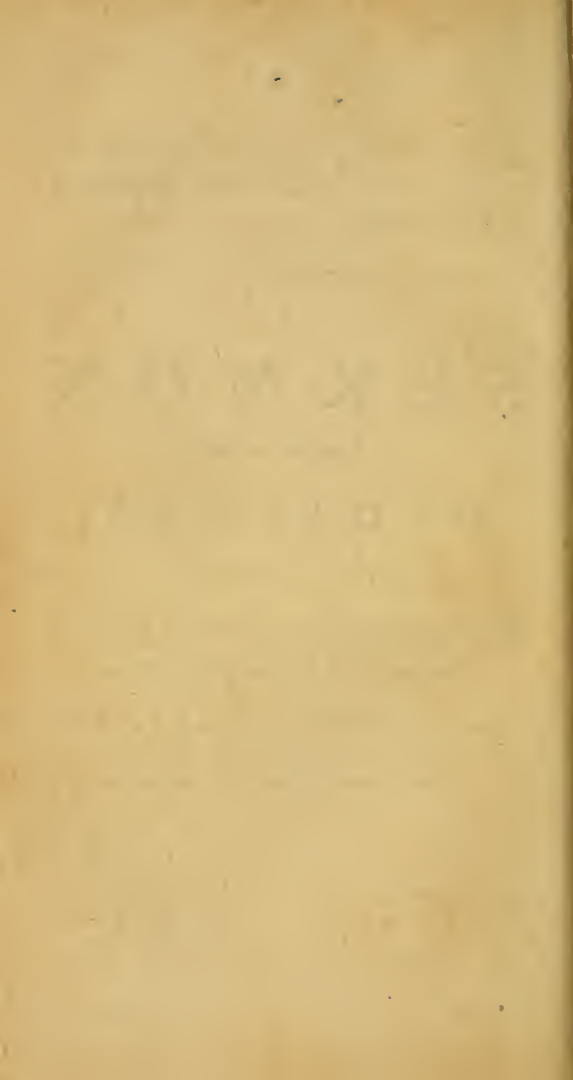
O L D - J E W R Y,

A P R I L 19, 1731.

For the Benefit of the CHARITY-
SCHOOL in Crutched-Fryars.

By WILLIAM WISHART, D. D.

The SECOND EDITION corrected.



1 Tim. i. 5.

*Now the End of the Commandment is Charity,
out of a pure Heart, and of a good Con-
science, and of Faith unfeigned.*

TIS the distinguishing character of a rational Being, that he acts for an end ; has some purpose in view in every thing he does : and the only way to the just and regular conduct of life, is to have One settled and regular aim ; which, once well fixed, must be steddily kept to, and all our other views and designs brought into subjection and subordination to it.

To find what should be the great end in life for such rational creatures as we are ; we may either enquire into the powers and capacities of human nature, or consider the discoveries our infinitely great and good Creator may have given us of his will : and certainly, if he has been pleased to give us any revelation of his will for our happiness, an enquiry into the great purpose of that revelation must be one sure way of discovering what is our chief end ; what is that greatest perfection of our nature we are constantly to aim at ; as well as what are the most proper means of attaining it.

As the Christian revelation contains the most full and perfect discovery of the will of God for the happiness of mankind ; the great and main purpose of that revelation is chiefly to be consider'd and regarded, in order to determine what should be our main end in life.

To a well disposed mind it must be a most agreeable and entertaining piece of speculation, to discern and observe the beautiful subordination of one thing to another, and of every thing to that which is chief and principal, in the Christian institution : 'tis however far from being a matter of meer speculation, rightly to understand the main end and design of Religion and Christianity ; but it is, of all things, of the greatest importance, and most extensive use, in practice ; as the want of such a right understanding is the source of the most gross and dangerous mistakes in the conduct of life.

The common mistake to which the folly and superstition of men, in all ages, has led them, is to over-value things of lesser importance in Religion, in comparison with greater ; to substitute the *means* in place of the *end* ; or to rest on *these*, as in themselves sufficient. Now, if in any case, the worth and excellency of means lies in their subserviency to the end, whence they derive their value ; there can hardly be a grosser blunder in practice, than to substitute
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the means in place of the end ; or to use them otherwise than with regard, and in subserviency, to it.

But, if we once justly fix the main end of the Christian institution ; a due regard to that will lead us to a right understanding of the comparative worth and excellency of the several things contained in it ; will direct us what we ought chiefly to be concerned about, and should have in our view, in our use of all the means Christianity points out to us ; will lead us to the justest rule of Charity, and the most proper terms of Christian communion ; and will furnish us with the truest test whereby to examine ourselves, whether we comply with the great design of the gospel : concerning all which points profess'd Christians in all ages, and even many of the guides and leaders of the Christian Church, have fallen into wretched mistakes : in fine, a just consideration of the main end of Christianity will afford us an amiable and engaging view of its excellency, to recommend it to our hearty love and reception.

This is therefore a most important enquiry, what is the main end and design of the Christian institution ? and we have a plain answer to it, in express terms, in my text : *the end of the Commandment is charity, &c.*

By *the commandment* here, some interpreters understand the moral part of the law of *Moses* : but I conceive 'tis more agreeable to the purpose of the Apostle to understand it of the Christian institution. He is here putting *Timothy* in mind of the charge he had given him to guard against the introducing of *new doctrines* into the Christian Church : and to enable him the better to execute that charge, he gives him this view of the design of Christianity, a *swerving* from which is the source of the grossest errors ; he gives him this key, as it were, into the whole christian institution ; *the end of the commandment, or of the institution, charge, * or appointment*, as the original word signifies, is Charity, &c. Where Christianity is considered as an institution of Heaven, enforced by divine authority ; and the *end* of it is declared to be *Charity*, &c.

In discoursing on this argument, I propose ; in the

First place, to explain the nature of that *Charity*, here spoken of.

Secondly, to illustrate the Principle, that this Charity is *the end of Christianity*.

And Thirdly, to make some improvement of this principle ; and draw some proper conclusions from it.

* See Ver. 18.

First, then, I am to show, what is this *Charity* which is here declared to be *the end of the commandment*.

The word *Charity* in common speech is used in a narrow sense, to express only some one branch of that extensive *Charity* which is the end of the commandment: sometimes, bounty to the poor; sometimes a favourable opinion of our neighbours: both these are particular exercises of that *Charity* here spoken of; but neither any one of them, nor both of them together, are comprehensive of the whole of that *Charity* which is the end of the commandment. The original word which here, and in other places* is rendered *Charity*, might as well be rendered *Love*. Now this *Love* includes in it, Universal Benevolence; and the prevailing Love of Goodness.

1. This *Love* includes in it, Universal Benevolence; or a kind affection towards all rational Beings, particularly towards those of our own kind, with whom we have a special connection, and to whom we have special opportunities to be beneficial; such a kind affection as makes us sincerely and heartily desire their welfare and happiness, as we do our own; and readily promote it, if it is in our power; or if any

* 1 Cor. xiii. throughout, and xiv. 1.

one's happiness is so perfect and fix'd that it cannot be increased or promoted by us, to be well-affected towards it, and rejoice in it. In like manner, as our self-love leads us to consult our own happiness ; our love to others lies in our being well-affected to theirs. And, this good-will, and affection to the happiness of others, must not be confined to those of our own kind, but extended to the whole rational world ; and must rise to the greatest joy in the perfect and unalterable happiness of the supreme mind, the Head and Father of the Rational System.

This is the principle of Goodness or Benevolence ; so far as it may be supposed in the mind antecedent to all reflection on what passes within, all contemplation of our own affections and actions, all sense of inward beauty and deformity.

That there is such a disposition of Benevolence or social affection in Human Nature, independent of all deliberate views of self-interest ; and exerting itself oft-times without any prospect of advantage to ourselves, is a point which may indeed be artfully and plausibly disputed by a sort of fashionable Moralists, who are for new-molding the human heart ; and making a Moral World of their own, as a certain philosopher attempted to do a Natural one ; by resolving all the springs of action in our
breasts

breasts into either a rash and hasty, or a cool and deliberate selfishness : but every plain man is sensible of such a benevolent principle in himself ; who can, with an honest heart, say to his neighbour, *I am glad to see you well* : every one may be sensible of it, who will reflect what an immediate uneasiness he feels upon beholding a fellow-creature in pain or calamity ; what an immediate joy he feels on beholding others happy around him, especially if it is by his means ; without being conscious to himself of any such selfish reflections as those Philosophers would resolve this joy or uneasiness into ; and who, withal considers what force in the mind that sympathizing sense has, when the mind is under no byass from the view of some private good interfering with the good of others. But,

2. This Love includes in it the Love of the disposition of Goodness and Kindness itself, flowing from a sense of the beauty and amiableness of it. There is a passage in the Prophecies of *Micah* ; with Chap. and 8th ver. which plainly leads to this thought ; where the Prophet mentions, among the things that are good, and which the Lord requires of us, *to love Mercy*. 'Tis the property of human nature, that man is not only capable of discerning those outward objects which fall under his senses ; and of a liking, or aversion, to them ; but he is also

also capable of reflecting on his own mind ; taking a view of his own inward affections ; discerning a good or ill within, in the temper of the mind ; and of loving good affections, and hating evil ones. And, as kindness and benevolence is the most amiable affection of the Soul ; the justest principle of the exercise of it is the prevailing Love of mercy and kindness : this is the most strong and steady principle of the exercise of goodness, when the disposition itself is lov'd, and from love to it is cherished in the Soul.

We may discern something of the beauty and amiableness of goodness and kindness, compassion and generosity, by reflecting upon our own minds when we are at any time remarkably affected that way : we may have a most conspicuous and affecting view of it, in beholding a Character remarkably good and generous set forth to observation. If we'll catch ourselves in the natural excursions of our thoughts, and the play of our own hearts, even in the most easy and careless hours ; we shall find our minds often employ'd in forming such characters : the most elegant pens have shewn the greatest art in this way : in the view of such an amiable form 'tis natural for the heart to take part ; and to feel the most lively touches of the love of goodness ; to be interested in it, and engaged for it : the
force

force of such a view is conspicuous even on the most vicious and abandon'd persons ; who, in viewing such a character, are apt to be touch'd with remorse for forsaken Virtue ; and can hardly escape feeling some inward admiration of what they behold, and forming some secret wishes that such a character and such actions were their own. And the more of goodness and kindness there be in any character, the more amiable and engaging is it : the contemplation and love of such a fair form of virtue tends naturally, and even insensibly, to strengthen the disposition of goodness in ourselves. And, if goodness, wherever it appears, commands esteem and love, according to the degree of it ; and is naturally view'd with pleasure ; it must certainly be supremely amiable in its highest perfection and brightest lustre, in the blessed God the Father of Mercies, who is Love, and who delights in mercy.

Now, this love of goodness is the strongest principle of the exercise of it ; and serves to secure the constancy of it : this principle of a deliberate and prevailing love of goodness and kindness is not so liable to be shaken, by innumerable occurrences that will spoil a meer sweetness of temper : the more our goodness grows into a fixed habit and principle ; the more able will it be to over-balance the force of opposite affections, and

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stand proof against those hasty sallies of passion, which the sweetest and kindest temper is liable to be overcome by, where kindness is from temper and instinct meerly, and not from deliberate choice and a settled principle.

And thus I have shewn what is contained in that Love the Apostle here speaks of. But the nature of it may be yet further illustrated, by mentioning some properties of it. And,

[1.] This Love must be the prevailing and governing principle in the heart. Our other affections must be brought into subjection to it, and under the government of it: and those unnatural passions, and excesses of our self-affections, that are contrary to it, must be rooted out, and put far from us.

[2.] 'Tis an universal and extensive Love. Not confined by narrow and particular distinctions, (tho' in a special manner exercised towards those with whom we are joined by special ties) but extended to all mankind. Nay, our Love must not be confin'd even to those of our own kind: but we must be well-affected to the common and universal good of the whole rational world: and this exercise of Love opens a joy to the mind that is possessed of just notions of God; from the satisfaction it has, that this general good and happiness

ness is secured, amidst all events, by the perfectly good, wise, and powerful administration of the Universal Governor of the world. Nor must our Love be confin'd to the inferior and created part of the rational system: but it must rise to the highest esteem of, and delight in, God, the Head and Father of it; whose character is, the Perfection of Goodness, join'd with those other properties which serve to secure the successful, extensive, and perpetual exercise of it: it must rise to the purest joy, in the perfect and unalterable happiness of that Being, whose character the truly good and generous mind stands best affected to; an entire good affection to his perfectly wise and good administration; and an acquiescence in every part of his disposal of things. Thus our Love must be extensive and universal. But yet it is to be observ'd; that the Holy Scriptures, in describing the exercise of this Love, do particularly insist upon the several exercises of it towards those of our fellow-creatures with whom we live and converse; and to whom we have opportunity to be beneficial by it. And this may be for these two reasons.

1. Because the exercise of our Love towards *them* is the special proof and tryal of the sincerity of it: 'tis easy to pretend to love in cases where there is no opportunity to

put that pretence to the tryal ; by bestowing benefits on him whom we pretend to love, at any trouble or expence to ourselves, or with the crossing of our self-appetites : but the proof of our Love lies in the exercise of it towards those to whom we can be beneficial. 2. Because the true love of God is no other than the highest exercise of that same principle of benevolence and the love of goodness, which leads us to be kind and beneficent to our fellow-creatures : namely, as it is exercis'd towards a Being of perfect and unalterable goodness, the Head and Father of the rational creation ; by whose wise and good government the universal good and general happiness is secured ; in which is included the particular happiness of all those whose Souls, by the means his infinite wisdom and goodness has been pleased to afford them, are form'd into the temper of bliss, and fitted to enter into the joy of the Lord. And our Love to God is not only to be exercised in those inward acts of esteem and admiration, delight and joy, above-mentioned ; but also in concurring with the designs of his goodness ; and in substantial and beneficial effects ; not to him indeed, to whom we cannot be profitable, but to those to whom he requires us to do good as we love Him. For,

[3.] That Love which is the end of the commandment is an active and operative Principle. So far as it prevails in the Soul, it will be exerted not in faint wishes and ineffectual desires of the welfare of others ; but will prompt us to do them real benefits, as we have opportunity ; and the best in our power : it will make us heartily desire, and readily promote, the happiness of others, as our own ; rejoice in their welfare, and sympathize with them under their wants and calamities : in a word, it will exert itself in those several amiable exercises of Love beautifully described by the Apostle, 1 Cor. xiii. 4—8. *Charity suffereth long, and is kind, &c.*

But I must not omit to take some notice of the properties of this Charity, or Love, mentioned in my text.

'Tis *Charity out of a pure heart* : or *Love without dissimulation* * : sincere and entire : the several exercises of it proceeding from an inward and prevailing principle of Goodness in the Soul.

'Tis *Charity out of a good conscience* : exercised from a regard to the impartial judgment of our own minds, and dictates of our own hearts, under the just awe and reverence of a higher tribunal ; and from a concern to approve ourselves to God who

* Rom. xii. 9.

is greater than our hearts ; that, our own hearts not condemning us, we may have confidence towards him.*

'Tis *Charity out of faith unfeigned* : animated by a firm and effectual belief of the great truths of Religion and Christianity, which have the most direct influence and tendency to promote the principle and exercise of love and goodness ; such a Faith as proves its own sincerity and strength by its working by Love.

This is that true Christian *Charity*, or Love, which is *the end of the commandment*, or of the Christian institution : as I proceed now, in the

Second place, to show.

Some regard to the proper bounds of a discourse of this nature obliges me to pass over a number of beautiful passages of Holy Scripture ; where Love is expressly declared to be of greatest importance in Religion ; and at the same time a special stress is laid on the exercise of brotherly love, kindness and beneficence, as the special proof of the sincerity of our goodness : passages contained not only in the clearer discovery of God's will for our happiness in the New Testament ; but also in the revelations given by his holy Prophets under the Old Testament

* 1 Jo. iii. 18---22.

dispensation ;

dispensation; when multitudes of external and ceremonial observances in religion were in use, beyond what are now in the better times of reformation; which yet are, even there, declared to be of no avail in the sight of God, but despised and hated by him, without true goodness, mercy and beneficence.* I shall only take particular notice, that it is expressly declared that, in *Christ Jesus* the great thing which is of *avail* is *Faith that worketh by Love* †: that Charity, exercis'd in a way of mercy and compassion to our neighbours, particularly such as are in special circumstances of distress and exigency, and preserved pure from the contagion of worldly lusts; is expressly declared to be *pure and undefiled Religion* ‡: and in fine; that Love, particularly described as exercis'd in a way of kindness and beneficence to our fellow-creatures, has the preference given to it; not only before the most shining natural endowments, but also the greatest pretences to Religion, and the most extraordinary supernatural gifts; and even before Faith and Hope, the other most necessary Graces of the Christian life; as the end is preferr'd to the means §. And thus much shall suffice concerning ex-

* See Levit. xix. 18. Deut. vi. 5. Isa. i. 10.---- xviii. and lviii. 6, 7, 10. Am. v. 21.----25. Mic. vi. 6.----8. † Gal. v. 6. ‡ Jam. i. 27. § 1 Cor. xiii.

press declarations of Holy Scripture, concurring with this of my text, that *the end of the commandment is Charity.*

But nothing, methinks, can in a more clear and satisfying manner show, that the *end* of the Christian institution is *Love*; than the consideration how evidently every thing in it conspires to that *end*.

And here 'tis proper to consider, in the

First place, The discoveries it gives us of the nature and character of God; the standard of all moral perfection. Christianity tends to sweeten our dispositions, by the most amiable view of perfect Goodness and Love reigning above, and animating the whole conduct of the Governor of the world: it raises us to the love of the perfection of goodness, as a real object of our affection; and animates us by the glorious example of God, to aspire after a resemblance to Him in goodness; and to act in concurrence with Him, in our place and sphere, for promoting the designs of his goodness in the world. It raises our minds to the view of the perfection of goodness, as reigning in Heaven, and influencing the whole management of things in the Universe: it shows us that nothing in the world is left to be conducted by blind Chance, or inferior and imperfect skill; but every thing managed *according to the purpose of Him*
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whose kingdom ruleth over all *, *and who worketh all things, after the counsel of his own will* † ; *whose works in all their variety of forms are* ‡ *all made in wisdom, and made very good* §.

It gives us the most engaging representation of the pure Goodness and disinterested Benevolence of the Deity. Shows us that, *as fury is not in him* || ; and all those dire and horrid passions, that are the stain of any rational nature in which they are to be found, are far removed from him : so, he has no narrow and particular interest to turn him aside, or make him ever swerve, from the exercise of the most pure and unbounded goodness and kindness ; being infinitely perfect and happy, independent of his creatures, and standing in need of nothing ; so that he cannot be profited by our righteousness, neither can our wickedness hurt him †.

The Scripture describes to us his perfect goodness, in characters full of condescension to our capacities and ways of thinking ; and therefore most suited to affect our minds : of old his name was proclaimed, *the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, for*

* Ps. ciii. 19.

† Eph. i. 11.

‡ Ps. civ. 24.

§ Gen. i. 31.

|| Isa. xxvii. 4.

† Job xxxv.

6, 7, 8.

giving iniquity and transgression, and sin * : At the same time we are told, that he *will by no means clear the guilty* : his goodness is not a partial and ungovern'd fondness ; but is the extensive goodness of the universal Governor, and is always conducted in the particular exercises of it by the most consummate wisdom, and a prevailing regard to the general good of the world ; and therefore the sanctions with which he has wisely guarded those laws he has given to his reasonable creatures for the good of his rational kingdom, are not to be dispensed with out of weak and partial fondness ; and for this reason the wicked and impenitent transgressors of these laws must not pass unpunished ; nor can his goodness and wisdom suffer him to let his creation go to ruin, and laws form'd for its good be securely transgress'd, in partial favour to a wretch who is the stain of his glorious work. But further,

The Scripture represents him to us as a Being of the most *extensive* goodness and kindness : that he *is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works* † ; *is kind even to the unthankful and the evil* ‡ ; is the *preserver of man and of beast* § ; is *no respecter of persons* || ; but is the *Saviour of all*

* Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. † Ps. cxlv. 9. ‡ Luke vi. 35. § Ps. xxxvi. 6. || Acts. x. 34.

men, especially of those that believe *; that he will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth †; that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live ‡: He is described as the God of love and peace §; the God of patience and consolation ¶; merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy **; a father of the fatherless, a judge of the widow ††; the Saviour of the afflicted ††, and the refuge of the oppressed §§: He is the Father of Mercies and God of all Comfort |||; from whom every good and perfect gift comes ***.

His goodness is most steady and constant: his mercy endureth for ever †††: 'tis not confined within the bounds of time; but reaches to eternity, and extends to the bestowing of a happiness which lasts throughout eternal ages.

In a word, the Scripture sums up the character of God in this one view, that He is Love †††: He is not only Good; but Goodness is the very notion of his nature; and there is nothing in him contrary to that character. The Moral Perfections of God may all be summed up in this one view;

* 1 Tim. iv. 10. † 1 Tim. ii. 4. ‡ Ezek. xxxiii. 11.
 § 2 Cor. xiii. 11. || Rom. xv. 5.
 ** Ps. ciii. 8. †† Ps. lxxviii. 5. †† Ps. xviii. 27.
 §§ Ps. ix. 9. ||| 2 Cor. i. 3. *** Jam. i. 17.
 ††† Ps. cxxxvi. ††† 1 Jo. iv. 8, 16.

the most perfect Goodness, regulated in its exercise by the most consummate and unerring Wisdom: and his Natural Perfections are amiable and adorable, as they are joined with the perfection of Goodness, and serve to secure the successful and perpetual exercise of it: as he is every where present, his goodness knows no bounds; as he is almighty, nothing can hinder the exercise and the success of it; and as he is everlasting, his goodness and mercy endure for ever: this is the beauty and glory of the Lord; *for how great is his Goodness, and how great is his Beauty* * ! This Goodness gives a lustre and beauty to all the other perfections of the Divine Nature; and strips them of that dread and terror, which would otherwise attend them. And, if the perfection of Goodness is the great Glory of the divine Nature; sure a conformity to Him in this character must be the greatest Glory our rational natures can be capable of.

To conclude this head: The Scripture declares to us that God *delights in mercy* †. This character of God seems to me to lead us to a view of the grand principle of the Divine conduct: He acts under no awe of a superior Authority, and from no narrow views of Self-interest; but does always what

* Zech. ix. 17.

† Mic. vii. 18.

is best and fittest, from the most pure and perfect Love of Goodness. This character likewise seems to lead us to some view of the Divine Blessedness and Happiness : He has the most pure and perfect delight and joy in the perfection of Goodness ; and is perfectly and unchangeably Happy, as he is perfectly and unalterably Good : and, if we are Good like him, we shall be happy like him too. In fine, this character of God seems to signify his Love to Goodness, and Delight in it, wherever he beholds it : and sure, if God loves goodness and delights in mercy ; nothing can be more acceptable to him in us, than that we resemble him in this character : that, as *He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his Works*, we also be good to all within our reach and as far as our influence can extend ; and as *his mercy endures for ever*, that we likewise never weary in well-doing, never swerve or depart from the paths of goodness and mercy.

And this is the Improvement which Christianity particularly requires us to make of the discovery it gives us of the Goodness of God. Namely, that we be allured and animated, by the view and sense of that Goodness to which we are unspeakably obliged, to set him before us as our great Pattern ; and *be followers of Him as dear Children ;*

aren * ; studying to be perfect as He is perfect, merciful as He is merciful †.

I might take notice, to this purpose, of a variety of precepts and directions of our blessed Saviour and his Apostles : which all concur in most earnestly recommending to us Love and Goodness, particularly as they are exercised towards our fellow-creatures and fellow-christians, in all the various instances of beneficence, forbearance, forgiveness, condescension and charity ; and which recommend this Love to us as a thing of the greatest importance, and in which much of the Life of Religion and Christianity lies ; as very comprehensive of our present Duty, and as the necessary preparation and disposition for our future felicity. But this branch of the Argument cannot fail to lie open and obvious to any one who carefully reads the New Testament ‡.

But I must take particular notice of what is most peculiar to the Christian institution ; as to the manner in which it displays to us
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* Eph. v. 1. † Mat. v. 48. comp. with Luk. vi. 36. ‡ Matt. v. 43---48. and vi. 14, 15. and vii. 1, 2, 12. and xviii. 21---35. and xxii. 37---40. Mar. xi. 25, 26. and xii. 30, 31. Luk. vi. 27.---38. and ix. 55, 56. and x. 27---37. Jo. xiii. 14, 15 ; 34, 35. and xv. 12, 13, 17. Acts xx. 35. Rom. xii. 9---21. and xiii. 8, 9, 10, and xiv. 1. 15. 19. and xv. 1, 2. 1 Cor. xiii. Gal. v. 13, 14 ; 22, 23. and vi. 2, 10. Eph. iv. 1, 2, 3 ; 31, 32. and
v. 1,

the character of God, as Love and Goodness, *viz.* that it gives us something upon this head which goes beyond bare description; and is far more fitted to affect our minds: namely, as the Gospel exhibits to our view a glorious Work of God, in which his Goodness and Mercy shine forth most illustriously, in an exercise of them that particularly concerns us; and in which His other perfections are represented to us as joining together for the accomplishment of the Designs of the most amazing Divine love and tender mercy: namely, the work of our redemption by Christ Jesus.

The foundation of Christianity is laid in the most glorious and engaging display of the kindness and mercy of God our Saviour towards men; *while they were Sinners**, and thus in circumstances both *wretched and provoking*; exceedingly standing in need of mercy from God, but deserving none at his hands.

When the Redeemer made his entry into the world, the multitude of the heavenly

v. 1, 2. Phil. ii. 1---8. Col. iii. 12---15. 1 Thes. iv. 9, 10. and v. 14, 15. 1 Tim. vi. 18. 2 Tim. ii. 24--- Tit. iii. 1, 2, 8. Heb. vi. 10. and x. 24. and xii. 14. and xiii. 1, 2, 3; 16. Ja. ii. 8, 13. and iii. 13---18. 1 Pet. iii. 8---13. and iv. 8, 9, 10. and v. 5. 2 Pet. i. 7. 1 Jo. ii. 9, 10, 11. and iii. 11---23. and iv. 7---21. 2 Jo. 5. 3 Jo. 11.

* Rom. v. 8.

Host, filled their Song of praise with *Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill towards men* *. And this is the Sum of the revelation of the Gospel ; *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life* †. And, beloved, says the Apostle, *if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another* ‡.

In the discovery of this great mystery of Divine Love ; we behold Infinite Goodness employing Infinite Wisdom and Almighty Power in a way of Compassion to wretched men, and for bringing about their recovery to purity and happiness : we behold the Father sending his only-begotten Son to save us ; and *giving Him to be the propitiation for our Sins* † : we behold the Son of God veiling his Glory, and appearing in the world *in the likeness of sinful flesh* § : and, *being found in fashion as a man, humbling himself to death, even the death of the Cross* ||, for our Salvation and Happiness. In this glorious work the Divine Love and Goodness shines forth in its greatest lustre and glory : and the other Perfections of the Divine nature are exhibited to us, as acting in concurrence, for promoting the designs of the most wonderful Love and tender Mercy.

* Luke ii. 14.

† Jo. iii. 16.

‡ 1 Jo. iv. 11.

† 1 Jo. iv. 10.

§ Rom. viii. 3.

|| Phil. ii. 8.

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This is that *Glory of the Lord*, which by the Gospel we are given to *behold*; and to behold for this end, that by the engaging and transforming view of it *we may be changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord**. And, of what engaging force is the just view of *this glory of God*, to reconcile us to God, and raise our Souls to the highest Love of Him? Of what force is this great example of Love to animate us to an imitation of it? how glorious and engaging is this Divine example of goodness? and how should our particular interest in this exercise of God's love further oblige us to imitate it?

The promoting of this disposition of Love and Goodness is likewise represented as the great *end* of all the institutions of the Christian worship. In general; it is represented as the design of a Ministry in the Church, *to edify the body of Christ in Love; that speaking the truth in Love, we may grow up into him in all things who is the head, even Christ†*. I shall only take particular notice, how conspicuously this is the design of those positive Institutions of the Christian worship, the two Sacraments. The first, Baptism, contains a proper emblem of that change which is brought on

* 2 Cor. iii, 18.

† Eph. iv. 12, 15, 16.

the minds of those who become true disciples of Jesus; when, as the Apostle *Peter* expresses it *, they *purify their Souls by obeying the truth through the Spirit, to the unfeigned Love of the Brethren*: and therefore plainly points out to us the obligations we are under to *love one another with a pure heart fervently*; as being *all Baptized into one Body* †. As to the other, the Lord's-Supper; the very outward action used in it is a proper and natural symbol of that mutual Love and Charity, that common Friendship, which should be among Christians of all ranks and characters; eating and drinking together at the same Table ‡, and, the amazing and condescending Love of the Redeemer, there commemorated, cannot be remembered as it ought; without animating us to the like love, kindness and benevolence, toward our neighbours. Again,

One special advantage of the Christian institution is, that it sets before us a perfect example of Divine Virtue, exercised in a human character; the example of *Jesus, the Author and finisher of our Faith* §. Now his character was, that *He went about doing good* ||; that *He loved us and gave himself for us* †: and almost in all places where the

* 1 Pet. i. 22. † 1 Cor. xii. 13. ‡ 1 Cor. x. 16, 17. § Heb. xii. 2. || Acts x. 38.
 † Eph. v. 2.

example of Christ is particularly proposed to our imitation, it is to recommend to us Love and Benevolence, or some of the Social Virtues that are included in it and spring from the prevalency of it* : particularly it is made use of, to engage us to abound in the grace of liberality ; as knowing *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that tho' he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich* †. Again,

When our blessed Saviour tells us on what terms we must be His disciples ; the first thing he insists upon is self-denial : *If any man will come after me let him deny himself* ‡ : i. e. let him renounce those narrow and selfish principles, that are opposite to universal Love and Benevolence ; let him mortify and subdue his selfish Appetites and Passions ; his desires of sensual pleasure, of worldly honour and glory, of worldly profit and gain, and even his love of life itself ; let him bring all these under the government of a prevailing principle of Goodness. This is the first lesson of Jesus Christ. Again,

The character of Brotherly Love is what our blessed Saviour pitches upon, as the shining and distinguishing mark by which

* See in several Passages cited above, pag. 146
 ---147. † 2 Cor. viii. 7, 9. ‡ Matt. xvi. 24.

all men are to know His disciples *. Our title to the character of Christians is, by our blessed Saviour, put not upon the clearness of our *heads*, but on the honesty and sincerity of our *hearts*; not upon the exactness of our speculative notions in matters of intricacy and nicety, but on the goodness of our dispositions; particularly, our being well-affected towards those of our own frame and nature, kindly disposed towards that Body of which we are members. Again,

One special mean by which Christianity excites us to *all holy conversation and godliness* †; is, that it sets our accountableness to God, as the Moral Governor of the World, in the clearest and strongest light: it sets before us the awful solemnities of a Great day of Judgment; when *we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad* ‡. Now; when that great day shall come, what account does our Saviour and our Judge give us of the procedure of it? We may see it, *Matt. xxv. 31—46.* where there are two things very remarkable to our present purpose.

1. That our Saviour represents himself at

* Jo. xiii. 35. † 2 Pet. iii. 11. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 10, 11. and Act. xvii. 30, 31.

the day of judgment, as reckoning to his own *account* the acts of kindness and mercy we do to our Brethren in distress and want, whom he calls His Brethren; he reckons such acts of mercy to them, and even to the *least* and meanest of them, done to himself: *I was an hungred*, says he, *and ye gave me meat*, &c. for *inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my Brethren*, ye have done it unto me: and, in like manner, he takes the refusal of such acts of kindness to them, as if we had refused them to himself. 2. That the sentence of our Judge, receiving men to happiness, or condemning them to misery, is represented by Himself to turn upon their having performed, or neglected, acts of mercy and kindness to their distressed and necessitous Brethren: He says to them on his right hand, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom*, &c. for *I was an hungred*, and ye gave me meat, &c. *inasmuch as ye did it to—my brethren*: and to them on the left hand, he says, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire—for I was an hungred*, and ye gave me no meat, &c. *inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these*, &c. In fine,

Let us consider the representation the Gospel gives us of that *Life and Immortality*, which is brought to light by it*; of

* 2 Tim. i. 10.

that glorious and happy state in the other world, which it calls us to aspire after, as the End of our Faith and Hope: and we shall find it represents the Perfection of love, as the main ingredient in a State of consummate Bliss, and the foundation of the happiness of that state: it raises our minds to a view of the amiableness of goodness, and of the joys arising from it; by some distant prospect of its highest exercise, and most perfect state. According to the hints given to us by the Apostles *Paul* * and *John* †, we find that in the other world *prophecies shall fail, tongues shall cease, our present knowledge shall vanish away; even Faith and Hope shall cease, and shall be swallowed up in Sight and Enjoyment; and all those ordinances and means that are calculated for the infirmities of our present condition, and appointed for the edifying of the body of Christ in Love, shall all be abolished, when Love is perfected; as the Scaffoldings in a building are pulled down, when It is finished. But Charity, or Love, never faileth: It enters into the Heavenly State; there it receives its perfection; and, being there made perfect, maintains a perpetual and undisturbed sway in the breasts of all the members of that exalted Society. There, the most pure and*

* 1 Cor. xiii. † Rev. xxi 22.

perfect Love of God shall for ever reign : Love exercised, not in ineffectual wishes, but the purest joy in the perfect and unalterable Happiness of that Being, whose character and government the glorified Soul stands perfectly well affected to ; Love exercised, not in a way of *painful desires* in a state of *absence from the Lord**, but *fulness of Joy in his presence†*. There shall be the most pure and perfect intercourse of Love and Kindness, among all the inhabitants of the Heavenly mansions : Love and Kindness exercised, not in a way of Sympathy and Compassion, under wants, weaknesses and imperfections (which has a mixture of Pain, tho' an over-balancing Pleasure, in it) but the purest Joy in the perfection and happiness of one another.

And thus, from the Discovery the Christian Institution gives us of the character of God ; from the view it affords us of his Love and Goodness manifested in our Redemption ; from the improvement it calls us to make of this view and discovery ; from the conspicuous design of the several institutions of the Christian worship ; from the example of the blessed Jesus ; from the first Lesson he teaches his disciples ; from the Mark he assigns whereby all men are to know them ; from the representation he

* 2 Cor. v. 6. † Ps. xvi. 11.

gives us of the procedure of the great day of Judgment; and from the view the Gospel opens to us of the Heavenly state: from all this, methinks, it is abundantly evident; that *the End of the Commandment is Charity*: that the great design and purpose of Christianity is to form our Souls into the disposition of Love and Goodness; and to train us up to the perfection of it. I proceed now, in the

Third Place, To make some improvement of this Principle; and draw some proper and useful conclusions from it. And,

1. From what hath been said, we may see the Goodness of that God we serve; and the excellency of that Religion we profess.

The goodness of God is no less conspicuous in the Laws and Commands he has given to us; than in his other works, and the rest of his merciful conduct towards us: yea more, than in the ordinary conduct of his Providence: *He hath magnified his word above all his name* *. In the ordinary conduct of his Providence, he shows his care of our Bodies, in continually doing them good: but in his Laws and Institutions he shows himself the Father of our Spirits, the kind Parent of human Society;

* Ps, cxxxviii. 2.

in giving Laws intirely calculated for the perfection and happiness of our Souls, and for the peace and welfare of Society; which is evident and conspicuous from this, that *the end of his commands is Love*. Sure then, none of his Institutions can be meer arbitrary Injunctions; but are all proper Means, known to be so by that infinite wisdom which prescribes them, for attaining to the best and most valuable End. The disposition of Love and Goodness; how happy a disposition is it for the Soul that is possessed of it! Effectually banishing so far as it obtains the Sway, all those fretful and tormenting passions which ruffle the temper, and gall the mind, and render the inward frame uneasy and unquiet; and, on the contrary, producing a sweetness of disposition, an inward tranquility, and a satisfaction and joy rooted in the temper of the mind itself, which is therefore steady and permanent: *a good man shall be satisfied from himself**. Every exercise of Love is accompanied with an inward pleasure and delight; a satisfaction and joy, which leaves nothing behind it; but on the contrary, improves upon a review, and in the reflection upon the happy temper, and on what we have done in that good bent of mind. How happy is that Soul in which Univer-

* Prov. xiv. 14.

sal Love reigns, and bears the sway over all other affections and passions! What would life be, were it an uniform train of the enjoyments which, arise from the prevalency of it! Withal, this noble disposition diffuses its benign influences on all around it. It checks, in the very root, those mischiefs that disturb and embitter human Society; and render men plagues to one another: It is the effectual principle of all those good offices, by which the benefit of others about us, and the prosperity of the public is promoted. And this happy disposition is that which God chiefly requires and regards; and is the End of all his Laws and Institutions to us.

Is the end of Christianity Universal Love? How amiable and engaging, then, is the Religion of Jesus! How gloriously distinguished from those Religions that prevail in *the dark places of the earth, which are full of the habitations of cruelty**; where the character of the Deity that is worshipped, or the nature of the worship performed to him, inspires the worshipper with rage and fury, and prompts him to act in blood and massacre? How evidently and intirely is Christianity calculated for the greatest happiness of those who comply with the design of it; and for the general benefit of

* Ps. lxxiv. 20.

mankind ? How conspicuous would this appear to ocular observation ; were the design of Christianity more universally complied with ; were its excellent precepts more practised, and the temper and conduct of its Professors more formed by its pure and peaceable Spirit and Tendency ? Then we could hardly doubt of our religion's bringing us to Heaven at last, when that Love which is the end of it is perfected ; while we saw how naturally it produced a Heaven wherever it prevailed, and so far as its influence took place.

The time will not allow me to pursue the point, how far this *alone* is a shining and convincing argument of the divine original of Christianity ? How much this innate goodness and amiableness of the Christian Institution should *alone* suffice to recommend it to our hearty reception ; as most worthy of the God of Love, and most fitted to promote our true perfection and happiness ! I shall only say this one thing : That, though I am conscious to myself I am as far as any man from a disposition to judge rashly, even of those who reject the words of our Saviour himself ; and am willing to leave them to the judgment of the Searcher of hearts, whose *mercies are great* * : yet, I must own, I am at a loss to conceive

* 2 Sam. xxiv. 14.

how a Soul, in which the love of goodness, and just notions of God, had a due prevalency, could reject (as an Enthusiastical, an useless, or pernicious Imposture) a claim to Divine Revelation, in which *the end of the commandment is Charity*; in which all the main branches of it have so evident and conspicuous a tendency to that end; and in which we are furnished with such great and peculiar means of promoting it: and that merely because of some passages scattered through the original records of that revelation, which at this distance of time, and in such different circumstances as to customs, manners and forms of speech, we are at a loss to explain or account for; or, because men might *possibly* have become good and happy, without having had this extraordinary help; or because the goodness of God not obliging him to grant the favour to all mankind; He has granted it only to such, and at such time, as his Wisdom saw best; or, in fine, because, through the prevalency of men's selfish passions and factious humours, rebelling against Love and against the Light, it has not the happy effect of promoting Love so universally as might be expected from the genuine tendency of it; or, for some such reasons as these. What! shall the exuberant *Lounty* of Heaven be for ever *restrained*; because the *best* gifts it can bestow may be *abused*? Will we confine
the

the *abundant* mercy of the great Parent of mankind to the bestowing of *meer necessities* on his Children ; and not allow it to reach even to the bestowing of additional helps, and providing more abundantly for the fulness of their joy and the security of their hopes ? or, if *his grace hath abounded toward us**, in this respect, shall we reject the favour, or not believe it comes from him, because *he hath not dealt so with every nation* ? When the very Variety we may observe in Nature ; and the various Calamities, of other kinds, mankind have to struggle with in this imperfect state of things ; might suffice to satisfy us that there may be most wise reasons, arising from the purposes of His Universal Government, for this difference. But,

2. The consideration of the main end and design of the Christian Institution may furnish us with a Rule, whereby to judge of the comparative worth and importance of the several things contained in it.

In any complex machine or contrivance, consisting of several parts, all formed for One great design ; the comparative value and importance of the several parts is to be measured by their usefulness and necessity, to contribute to the design of the whole. This is the case of the Christian Institution.

* Ephes. i. 7, 8.

The argument may stand thus. If the main End of the Christian Institution is not to try our wit and exercise our penetration, or to train us up to be exquisite and subtile Metaphysicians ; but, to purify our hearts to Love, and to edify the body of Christ in Love : then, the comparative worth and importance of the several things contained in that institution, is not to be measured by their intricacy or nicety, by their perplexedness or hardness to be understood ; but by their greater or less, their more or less direct, tendency and influence, to promote in us the disposition and exercise of Love and Goodness, and to train us up to the perfection of it.

I cannot, now, stand to make a particular application of this rule : but I speak as to wise men ; judge ye what I say : and sure I am, that a wise and practical improvement of it would lead us to the true way to peace in the Christian Church ; would engage us to follow more after that Unity in Affection, which is far more valuable in the sight of God and Christ, as well as more attainable, than the most exact Uniformity in Opinion ; and would never permit us to violate that Charity and Love which is the end of the commandment, in contending about other things which, at best, can only have the place of the Means, and are of no value in Christianity

Christianity further than as they are subservient to the End: whereas, if we *swerve* from this truly Apostolical Rule, no wonder we *turn aside unto va'n jangling* *.

I shall only make one particular Inference upon this head: namely; Is the *end* of Christianity Love? Then, preaching our Saviour's Great Law of Love †, is preaching Christ, and preaching the Gospel. This inference, I think, is sufficiently plain to stand in need of no illustration. Suffer now,

3. The word of Exhortation. Would You show Yourselfes Christians indeed; would You comply with the design of the Christian Institution, and answer *the end of the Commandment*; would You retrieve the Honour of Christianity, too lamentably sullied by the tempers and lives of many of its professors, and *wounded in the House of its friends*; would You adorn the Doctrine of God Your Saviour in all things; and make Your Religion, in Your practice of it, appear to the world in its native beauty and glory; would You reap the joys it is fitted to afford You, even here; would you rise to a state of perfection and happiness hereafter? Then, be persuaded to *follow after Charity* ‡: and improve all the means of grace for Your advancement in it.

* See the next verse to my text. † Jo. xiii. 34. and xiv. 12. and Gal. vi. 2. ‡ 1 Cor. xiv. 1.

And, as Charity is a Principle of an active nature, and one of the best methods of improving it is by exercising it; and where it prevails in the Soul, it cannot lie dead and unactive; but if we do not exercise it, upon proper occasions, our pretences to it are false and vain; let us be careful to exercise Love and Charity upon all proper occasions. And, the exercise of it in a way of beneficence to our fellow-creatures in distress and want, is a special proof of the sincerity of our Love and Goodness; and is an exercise of our Charity, which Christianity, as You have seen, lays a special stress upon.

The case of such as are early left destitute of the help of those to whose care they are by nature most immediately committed, has certainly a special claim to the compassion of humane and tender hearts: and there can hardly be any kind office which Nature itself more prompts us to, or which affords more inviting prospects to allure us to it; than contributing to the training up of poor Young ones, to a capacity not only of subsisting comfortably themselves, but also of being useful Members of Society. And, can there be a more proper imitation of our Heavenly Father; an amiable part of whose character it is, that He is *the Father* and helper of *the Fatherless*, and the destitute?

It

It is such an exercise of Your Charity and Bounty, I am now particularly pleading for. I crave Your liberal contribution to a *Charity-School*; where several poor Boys and Girls are brought up in the knowledge of those things that belong to their Eternal Happiness; and also trained up to a capacity of providing for themselves, and being useful in the world: and where more yet may have these advantages through Your Liberality.

Such an exercise of Your Charity is a special way of *Honouring the Lord*, and doing good to men, *with your Substance* *: as what is expended this way, is not only employed for providing early for the bodily necessities of those who otherwise might be in a very helpless condition, and putting them in a way of getting a Living honestly and usefully; but is also laid out for forming their minds to true Goodness and the several Virtues of Piety, Gratitude, Equity, Truth, Humility, and the like, which are so many branches and exercises of it; forming them thus, while there is the advantage of a natural kindness and tenderness of temper to work upon, and to conspire with the principles of Reason and Religion which may be employed to improve it into a settled and prevailing disposition, a Rational and

* Prov. iii. 9.

Religious Principle, in the Soul ; while the Natural Sense of Goodness is yet in a great measure undebauched, and good instructions and examples may in some measure take the start of vicious habits and inclinations.

When Charity-Schools are carefully employed to such a purpose as this ; I cannot see how any compassionate and considerate Heart can call in question the usefulness of them : when by means of such an institution, those who have the benefit of it would be so far from being spoiled for any useful service or work ; that, being (by the blessing of God) trained up to Goodness, Honesty, Humility and Self-denial, they might be the better disposed both to submit willingly to the lowest station of life Providence might offer for their support ; and to perform all the duties of it honestly and faithfully, from an inward principle of goodness.

This is indeed the main thing in the education of youth : that they be train'd up as reasonable and social creatures, and as Christians, to that temper and disposition which is their chief perfection and accomplishment as such. Other parts of Education, without this, may render them as capable of doing ill, as of doing good ; of being hurtful, as of being useful : but this, so far as, by the blessing of God (which we have
ground

ground to expect on such laudable endeavours) 'tis successful ; must make them really good and useful, in every station and relation of life. And the most beautiful plan of the Education of Youth might, I apprehend, be form'd on the view I have been giving of what is of greatest importance in Christianity ; and of greatest consequence to our Perfection and Happiness, as reasonable and social creatures : by considering the training of them up to Universal Love and Goodness, and to the exercise of it, as the main end and purpose of such an Education ; and the other parts of institution as subservient, either to the promoting of this disposition ; or to the qualifying 'of them for the various exercises of it, in the several stations of life their circumstances and capacities may lead them, or their Friends, to have in view.

And, in this respect, methinks, an Education upon a Charitable foundation may be reckon'd to have some peculiar advantages : as the kindness of those who have the chief care of it, may be naturally supposed to partake more of a rational and wisely conducted principle of goodness ; than that instinct of tenderness in natural Parents, which is ready oft-times to degenerate into an irregular and ungoverned fondness ; and, instead of checking the early sproutings of Vice in Children, is
too

too apt to indulge and nurse up in them Peevishness, Wilfulness, Selfishness, Pretentiousness and Resentment, and the like unsocial Passions: the dire effects of which afterwards, I am persuaded, would be less lamentably conspicuous than they commonly are; were it not for such an early indulgence.

Now, for this main part of Education I am speaking of; it is not enough that Young ones be led to a just understanding of the great principles and precepts of Religion and Christianity, in such a way as is most suited to their Capacities: but also great pains must be taken to form their tender Minds to the love of Goodness. All advantages afforded by their tempers and capacities, must be studied, and laid hold on: and all methods, most adapted to these, must be taken; to instil into them an early sense of Goodness, and draw them to the Love of it: to instil into them a sense of what they owe to a Perfectly-Good God, and a Compassionate Saviour; to their Native Country, our Happy Constitution, and the Auspicious Government of our Gracious Sovereign; to their Parents, Masters, Instructors, and Benefactors; and to all their Fellow-Creatures.

And here give me leave to speak my mind freely. I cannot but wish that more of that time, and care, and expence, which

is

is sometimes employed in teaching Children educated upon Charity such pieces of instruction as are neither requisite to lead them to the knowledge of the way to Eternal Life, nor to fit them for such services in a present life as the publick good may require they should be employed in ; were laid out in forming their Minds, after the manner I have been speaking of : and also in employing their hands, and training them up to labour in work suited to their capacities and strength ; that thus being inured and accustomed to labour, they might both be rendered more capable of it, and more ready to undertake it. This is, in a great measure, done in the School I am now pleading for Your Charitable help to ; and the Managers of it, I'm inform'd, are inclined to do it more : but the beginnings of such an attempt require Liberal Contributions ; which, therefore, I hope Your Charitable Regard to so good a design, will prompt You to give on this occasion.

But, I would gladly address some part of the application of what I have been discouraging on to the Young Ones that attend here *.

* The Charity-Children.

Q

“ My

“ My dear Children, part of the rising
 “ Hopes of Your Country, and of the
 “ Church of God ; what a fine Temper is
 “ it that the Gospel would form You to !
 “ what happy Creatures would You be,
 “ here and hereafter, were you such as
 “ Christ would have you to be !

“ Let me address myself to Your Good-
 “ nature, my little Children : let me ask
 “ you, Did You never do a good turn to
 “ any of your neighbours ? and was it not
 “ a great pleasure to you to do it ? Have
 “ You not sometimes seen your neigh-
 “ bours hurt or in pain ? and did it not
 “ give you pain to see it ? Did You not
 “ help them, then ; or endeavour to help
 “ them ? and did You not find great joy
 “ within You in doing it ? On the other
 “ hand, let me ask You ; Have You not
 “ sometimes been very angry at some of
 “ Your neighbours, or stiff and ill-natured ?
 “ and was it not a great pain to You ? did
 “ You not find yourselves very uneasy
 “ within ? and, when You got the revenge
 “ You desir’d, were You not angry and
 “ fretful with Yourselves again for that ?
 “ Believe me, it will always be so ; You’ll
 “ always be toss’d from one uneasiness to
 “ another, while these ill humours and
 “ passions prevail in You. But, if You
 “ be good, and kind, and grateful ; and
 “ love God and Christ, who are perfectly
 “ good

“ good and kind ; You’ll be happy, and
 “ have peace and joy in Your minds, which
 “ no man can take from You.

“ If You begin early now, to hate, and
 “ guard against all ill humours ; and to
 “ cherish in Yourselves a good, and kind,
 “ and thankful temper ; what will it be
 “ when You come to be Men and Wo-
 “ men, and to know better how to refuse
 “ evil and chuse good ? to be, then, grate-
 “ ful to God that made You, and performs
 “ all things for You ; thankful to Christ,
 “ who died to save You ; kind and loving
 “ to all about You ; doing all the good
 “ You can ; and doing to others as You
 “ would have them do to You, if You
 “ were in their place ? what satisfactions
 “ will all this afford You ! what peace and
 “ joy in your own minds will it give You,
 “ to find Yourselves right and well within ;
 “ to see others about You the better for
 “ You ; to have every body Love You,
 “ and bless You ; to have the great and
 “ good God, and Christ Your Saviour and
 “ Judge, Approve of You !

“ Think, Children, what gratitude You
 “ owe to Your Parents ; who have taken
 “ a tender care of You, when You were
 “ very troublesome and very helpless ; or
 “ think, what thanks You owe to those
 “ who have taken You up, when, perhaps,

“ Your Fathers and Mothers forsook You,
 “ or You were early deprived of them;
 “ or, it may be, they could only express
 “ their love by shedding tears of compas-
 “ sion over You, and bewailing their own
 “ unhappiness in being the instruments of
 “ bringing You into the world to want and
 “ calamity: what do You owe to those
 “ who have *then* taken care of You, as if
 “ You had been their own Children? If
 “ You have a just sense of this, it will be
 “ natural for You to think, *what can You*
 “ *do for them who have been so kind to You;*
 “ and to have even some regret within
 “ You, that you can do nothing but love
 “ and thank them. But I’ll tell You, for
 “ Your comfort, You can do a great deal
 “ for them; without any trouble or expence
 “ to Yourselfes; nay, to Your own great
 “ advantage: You can give them one of
 “ the chief joys of a generous mind; by
 “ letting them see You the Better for their
 “ care of You: this will make them think
 “ all their care and expence well-bestowed;
 “ and will encourage others to contribute
 “ liberally for Your benefit, and for the
 “ benefit of others in like circumstances
 “ with You.

“ But, if You owe so much to *them*;
 “ what do You owe to that God who
 “ made You, and preserves You, and gives
 “ You all good Things, and has provided

“ a Heaven for You? to God the Father
 “ of Mercies, who puts it into the Hearts
 “ of men to be kind to You; and to whose
 “ good and wise Providence it is owing
 “ that their kindness can do You any good,
 “ that their hearts can command their hands
 “ to help You, that they have food, to
 “ give You, and raiment to put on You!
 “ What do you owe to Jesus Christ, the
 “ compassionate Lover and Saviour of Man-
 “ kind? who, when You were sunk into
 “ ruin, has not only shewn You the way
 “ of Salvation and Happiness, but died to
 “ bring You to it!

“ Let these things, my dear Children,
 “ make an early impresson upon Your
 “ minds. 'Tis impossible for me to express
 “ what a source of Joy and Satisfaction
 “ throughout your whole life it will be to
 “ You, to remember Your Creator and Re-
 “ deemer in the days of Your Youth: to
 “ begin early to delight Yourselves in God;
 “ and to love and rejoice in Christ Jesus,
 “ the best Friend You ever had in the
 “ world, though an *unseen* one; to be good
 “ and kind, and thankful, and serviceable,
 “ and obliging, and forward to do all the
 “ good you can to every body.

“ None of you knows how soon You
 “ may die: and then, there is an end of
 “ Your time to fit Yourselves for Heaven;
 “ where love and goodness reign, and where

“ no unclean thing can enter. But if You
 “ were to live ever so long ; what joys do
 “ You lose, and what troubles and dangers
 “ do You expose yourselves to, so long as
 “ You delay minding the concerns of Your
 “ Souls ; even tho’ You could be sure of
 “ saving them at last !

“ Believe it ; You have Your Hearts
 “ now at a great advantage, in the spring
 “ and dawn of life. Any ill humours You
 “ find in Yourselfs will be much harder
 “ to overcome, if you let them grow, than
 “ they are now : Love and thankfulness to
 “ God and man, kindness and all goodness,
 “ will easily grow in You ; if You’ll be
 “ at some pains about them now, while
 “ Your Hearts are tender.

“ Therefore, give Your young and ten-
 “ der Hearts to Christ Jesus, before Sin
 “ and the World get faster hold of them.
 “ Go to Your knees, and beg of God
 “ grace to form Your hearts according to
 “ Christ’s instructions. Read carefully
 “ Your Bibles ; those parts especially which
 “ You can best understand ; the book of
 “ Proverbs, the History of our blessed Sa-
 “ viour, His instructions, and particularly
 “ his excellent Sermon upon the Mount :
 “ think well on what You read ; mind it,
 “ and observe it ; and beg God to help
 “ You to follow and obey it. To his Fa-
 “ therly care, and his blessing on the means
 “ of

“ of your education, I heartily recom-
 “ mend You.”

To conclude this long discourse. Let us not only, now, my Brethren, exercise Love and Charity ; but let us be careful to exercise it upon all proper occasions ; and endeavour more and more to advance and improve in that Noble and God-like disposition.

Let us, as we have opportunity, do good unto all men, especially to those of the household of Faith ; and let us not be weary of well-doing ; for in due time we shall reap, if we faint not. Let us encrease and abound in the superlative Love of God, the Perfection of Goodness and Beauty ; and in love to one another, and to all men. Let us often and much employ our minds in beholding and contemplating the Glory of divine love and goodness, especially as it is discovered to us in Christ Jesus ; that our Souls may be captivated by the view of it ; and we may experience more and more of its transforming power, changing us into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Thus shall we enjoy a constant encrease of the Joys and triumphs of Love reigning within us : thus shall we have the pleasure of beholding more and more of the benign influences, and happy effects of it, round

about us : and thus shall we make further and further advances towards that state of Perfection, Glory and Bliss ; where other, now-shining, qualities and endowments shall cease ; but Love and Goodness in Perfection shall for ever reign.



*The certain and unchangeable Difference
betwixt Moral Good and Evil.*

A

S E R M O N

Preached before the

SOCIETIES for Reformation of
MANNERS,

A T

SALTERS-HALL;

O N

MONDAY the 3d of JULY, 1732.

Published at their Request.

By WILLIAM WISHART, D.D.

The SECOND EDITION corrected.

ISAIAH V. 20.

Wo unto them that call Evil Good, and Good Evil ; that put Darknefs for Light, and Light for Darknefs ; that put Bitter for Sweet, and Sweet for Bitter.

IT is too obvious to every one, how much vice and wickedness, of all sorts, abound among us. This general corruption of manners is, no doubt, in a great measure to be imputed to wretched mistakes and prejudices. Those lusts by which Sinners are drawn away and enticed, must be exceedingly strengthen'd by a depraved way of thinking ; by confounding virtue with vice, or covering over vices with the appearance of commendable qualities : the influence of Principle, being thus added to the force of Inclination.

However, therefore, unable we may be to remedy other sources of vice ; we may, at least, do something towards the amendment of Sinners ; if we can effectually convince them, “ that there is a fix'd and unchange-
 “ able difference betwixt moral Good and
 “ Evil : that virtue has a natural tendency
 “ to the happiness and welfare, vice to the
 “ hurt and ruin, of human society, and of
 “ particular persons.”

If

If by such conclusions, justly drawn from evident principles, we cannot effectually reconcile the hearts of sinners to the commands of God, and to the yoke of the Redeemer ; we may yet show, that the prejudices they entertain, against the Divine Government as heavy and tyrannical, against the Laws of God as arbitrary impositions, against the yoke of the Redeemer as a grievous burden, are altogether groundless : seeing those things which God requires of us, and which the Love of Jesus recommends, are in their own nature good ; even tho' they were not enforced by such additional and engaging obligations.

Hence, also, it will plainly follow ; that they who *stand up against evil doers*, and join together in using their best endeavours for promoting a Reformation of manners, are most usefully and laudably imployed : their endeavours, so far as they are influenced by sincere and well-conducted aims at this valuable purpose, are exceeding beneficial to human Society ; and may be so even to Sinners themselves.

For which reasons, being call'd to preach before the *Societies for Reformation of Manners* ; I could not think of any more proper subject for me to insist upon, than the establishment of that principle, which both contains the best justification of their design, and is the foundation of the most proper arguments

guments to persuade Sinners themselves to comply with it : namely, “ that there is a
 “ natural and unalterable difference betwixt
 “ Moral Good and Evil ; even setting aside
 “ the consideration of all Laws, either hu-
 “ man or divine.”

An attempt of this nature is the more requisite ; because there have arisen in these latter days *scoffers walking after their own lusts* ; revivers of the schemes and cavils of the ancient Scepticks, and worst sort of Epicureans : a set of men who, not satisfy'd with attacking the principles of revealed Religion and Christianity, have set themselves to oppose the common principles of natural Religion itself, acknowledged even by Heathens ; nay, have endeavoured in a bold, and at the same time a shrewd and artful, manner to overturn the difference betwixt 'moral Good and Evil, to confound Virtue with Vice.

To such as these may the character and denunciation in my text by justly applied.
Wo to them, &c.

Where, by the comparison that is hinted betwixt those who, in life and manners, *call evil good, and good evil* ; and those who *put darkness for light, &c.* it is plainly intimated,

“ That the difference betwixt good and
 “ evil in life and manners, is in itself as
 “ fix'd and certain ; as the difference be-
 “ twixt light and darkness, a bitter and

“ sweet taste: the *one* no more depends upon
 “ the meer will and pleasure of any, than
 “ the other.”

This Principle I am now to endeavour, by divine aid, to illustrate. And that I may set the evidence of it before you in the clearest manner I can; let us endeavour to fix the meaning they can be supposed to have, who deny or call in question the natural difference betwixt good and evil in the manners of men. It cannot, surely, be to assert, “ that there is no difference at all, in the
 “ nature of things, betwixt one kind of tem-
 “ per and behaviour and another :” for *some* difference betwixt these evidently arises from the obvious and undeniable difference betwixt the objects of sense themselves. ’Tis certainly obvious, that, if pleasure and pain are naturally and unalterably different, the actions which cause the one and those that cause the other, together with the dispositions and affections from which such actions naturally flow, must have as fix’d and unchangeable a difference betwixt them: if life and death, if health and sickness, are in their own nature different things; sure, wounding and healing, killing and preserving life, must be as different actions; love and hatred as different affections.

To deny such things as these, can scarce be supposed to be the meaning even of those who call in question the difference betwixt
 moral

moral Good and Evil: but their intention, I suppose, must be to maintain; “that there is no *such* natural difference betwixt these evidently different kinds of affections and actions, as that the *one* can be call’d *good*, and the *other evil*; in any other sense, than as the *one* is *obedience* to the *Laws* of some superior, the *other* a *transgression* of them.”

But, let us see again, what can be the meaning of this. Is it, “that it is in itself indifferent, with respect to *others*, what way we are affected, or behave towards them? or is it that it is indifferent to a *man’s self*, how he is affected, or behaves towards his neighbours and the publick?”

But, certainly, it cannot, with any face of probability, be maintain’d; that one kind of temper and behaviour is not in its own nature *good*, and another *ill*, towards our neighbours and society. Can it be said to be *indifferent* to our neighbours, whether we do them good or ill; love them, or hate them? *indifferent* to society, whether we be well or ill-affected to its interests; whether we behave towards it, as a good or an ill affection directs? This, sure, is too plain a case to admit of any dispute.

The main strength, therefore, of those who deny the natural difference betwixt moral Good and Evil, if they can be supposed to have any, must be reckoned to lie here.

“ Allowing that different actions and af-
 “ fections of ours have a different ten-
 “ dency to the good or hurt of others, or of
 “ society ; yet, what is that to us ? How
 “ are we obliged to consult the good of
 “ others, and of the publick ; or to refrain
 “ from doing them hurt, if we can compass
 “ our own private advantage that way ? ”

In life and practice it is very obvious, that the strongest opposition to such a constant exercise of kind affections, as is most beneficial to others and society, arises from an apprehended Self-interest interfering with them ; from an apprehension that in acting otherwise, we consult our own good, and enjoy our private advantage, however others may suffer by it.

It is, therefore, of the greatest importance in this argument, to show,

That it is not indifferent to ourselves how we are affected, or how we behave towards others and the publick ; but the same temper and conduct which is *best for them*, is likewise *best for ourselves*, and most conducive to our true happiness and enjoyment. For which purpose let us consider,

I. To what temper and conduct some *Natural Affections* of our own hearts would lead us.

II. What temper and conduct our own minds, on a deliberate view, approve of : and in fine,

III. What

III. What temper and conduct, in the whole, is most conducive to our truest and greatest enjoyment.

I. Let us consider what temper and conduct, some Natural affections of our own hearts would lead us to.

Let us reflect on the pain we naturally feel at the very first, in beholding any fellow-creature in great distress; the joy we naturally conceive in beholding others happy; the inclination we find in ourselves oft-times to afford help to others, when occasion offers; the sense of gratitude we naturally feel on our first receiving a considerable obligation: let us reflect on what we may have felt or observed, of the Natural Affection of Parents towards their Offspring, especially in their most tender and helpless, which at the same time is their most troublesome, condition. Are not all these evident symptoms of some *good-will* to others, *natural* to our frame?

Some there may be, indeed, who, by habitually abandoning themselves to the government of some violent passions or narrow selfishness, have suppress'd, in a great measure, all such social feeling in themselves; and 'tis no wonder if such as these be *asham'd* to own any movements of the heart to be *natural*, which they are *willing*, and even at pains, to divest themselves of; and averse

to allow of any greater portion of kindness and goodness among men, than they care to cherish in themselves. But what should induce others, who are under no such byass, to belye their own hearts; and explain away their most natural affections, by resolving them into a train of reflections they are not conscious to themselves of when they feel them? unless it be an unaccountable fondness for an hypothesis, which is liked for its fancied easiness, being imagin'd a pretty knack of resolving all the movements of the human heart into one single principle: for such is the tale of some modern Philosophers: “ When we see others happy, or in
 “ pain, we immediately imagine the case
 “ our own; and transporting ourselves by
 “ a sort of imperceptible magick into their
 “ circumstances, ’tis for ourselves meerly
 “ we feel the joy or pain, which we flatter
 “ ourselves arises from a concern for others:
 “ Parents consider their young ones as parts
 “ of themselves (no doubt, the brute creatures do so too!) “ and so their affection
 “ for them, and concern about them, is a
 “ mere exercise of self-love.” Curious Philosophy! might these ingenious Gentlemen be but allowed the uncommon privilege of coining Natural-History; but if not,

I may appeal to every one, whether the sense of joy he has in beholding others happy, or his sympathizing pain in viewing their
 distressed,

distresses, are not frequently observed to arise as immediately in his heart, upon discerning the symptoms of their happiness or distress ; as any other affection arises immediately, upon its proper object being presented to us ? Whether the sense of joy or grief, by way of sympathy, is not oft-times evidently perceived to prevent any reflection on his own case ; and even to dwell for some time upon the mind, before it is heighten'd by such a reflexion, as that the case of the person we see in joy or pain might be our own ? And, how should the imagination, that the case of the afflicted person *may be* our own, when we know it is not, give us any concern for another ; especially such a concern as we don't seek to get rid of, but by removing the calamity of another that rais'd it ? What should hinder us, after the first uneasiness supposed to arise from the imagination of the case being our own was over, instead of feeling any sympathizing pain in another's calamity, from using the view of it rather to give an accession to our joy, that the case is otherwise with us ? We may, indeed, find ourselves obliged sometimes to suppose ourselves in the case of the afflicted, in order to give us a more lively sense of what he feels, and how heavy the distress lies upon him : but, certainly, it will not follow from this ; that a sympathy, which requires no more to raise it than a full sense
of

of another's distress, is a concern rather for *ourselves* than for *him*. Again: does not the inclination to afford help to others, exert itself sometimes as immediately, upon occasions for it presenting themselves; as any other, of our most natural appetites and inclinations? Is it not a most natural movement of the heart, in all disinterested cases? Nay, is it not often felt to overcome an apprehended self-interest; and make us forget a concern for ourselves; particularly on occasions of sudden danger to others? In fine, is not the natural affection of parents towards their children oft-times felt and seen to prevent reason and out-run deliberation? Is it not frequently exercised in the strongest and most tender manner, without the least thought of *their children being parts of themselves*?

'Tis strange to observe what pains some are at to resolve every affection of the human heart into, either a rash and hasty, or a cool and deliberate, Selfishness: nor can I think it would be any thing more absurd and unaccountable, if one should take it in his head to resolve our Self-love into Social affection. Sure I am, that oft-times the relish of these enjoyments, which are reckon'd most to belong to private satisfaction and to be sought out of meer self-love, arises more from something of a social sense, and some reference to others either real or imagin'd sharers

sharers in them ; than from any thing else : and the grossest trespasses against the general welfare of human society, and those crimes that are most hurtful to particular persons, will be found commonly owing more to a narrow and misguided social affection, an attachment to the interest of some particular Society with which a man is connected, either by his circumstances or by choice ; than to meer self-interest. And who is there that would not gain any advantage to himself, rather *without* than *with* the hurt of any other ; if he thought it might as certainly and easily be compass'd either way ; and was equally free from any apprehension of danger to himself, in *either* case ?

Now let us consider what is the evident natural tendency of those kind Affections, of which such plain symptoms are to be discerned in our own hearts : whither would they lead us ; if they were not check'd by other passions arising from, or cherish'd by, apprehensions of Interest ? And, seeing the good and welfare of others is the *immediate and direct* object of these affections ; their natural bent, unless by some foreign influence restrain'd, must be after the highest pitch and greatest extent of *that good* : *Love worketh no ill to one's neighbour* ; but must prompt us to do all the good we can ; and lead us to a hearty good-will to all mankind, nay to the whole system of rational Beings :

Beings ; and a good affection to an universal Administration, by which we conceive the general happiness is secured. 'Tis indeed of the nature of this *kind Affection*, as appears by several natural symptoms of it, that it be more particularly exercised towards those to whom we have special opportunities of doing good, those with whom we are join'd by peculiar ties : and this is very agreeable to the universal extent of it ; for it is by being kind more particularly to *them*, that every one most directly contributes, in his place, to the general welfare ; provided always that this special kindness be exercised agreeably to an universal goodwill, and no peculiar ties make us forget the common ties of humanity.

From what has been said on this argument, we may conclude, that we gratify a *natural inclination* of our hearts, in *doing good to others* ; as well as in *doing well for ourselves* : that we run cross to a *natural bent* of our hearts, in neglecting to do good, or in doing hurt to others ; as well as in neglecting what belongs to our own welfare, or doing harm to ourselves. Which of these two Affections, Self-love or Benevolence, 'tis best for us to gratify ; need not be a question, unless they are inconsistent and come in competition : nor is there, in reality, any place for it ; if these two Affections, conducted by just views of what belongs

belongs to our own and other men's welfare, are perfectly harmonious, and are best gratified together. And whether this is not really the case, may afterwards appear. But, let us now consider,

II. What temper and conduct our own minds, on a deliberate view, approve.

In like manner, as no sooner the Eye opens and turns upon certain figures, but they please as beautiful; so, the eye of the Mind no sooner opens upon, or is presented with the view of, certain actions and the symptoms of certain affections; but we approve of one kind, as fair and amiable; condemn another, as foul and deform'd. The good and kind, the generous and grateful, the pious and devout part (especially where the devotion partakes mostly of love and resignation to the perfection of goodness and wisdom) is always approv'd; and the contrary condemn'd.

The good character may indeed have the appearance of its contrary so artfully cast on it, that the mind may be misled to condemn it; and the bad one may be so disguised with the appearance of goodness, that the mind may be drawn to approve it: and 'tis only this way that the judgment of the mind can be misled; tho' by interest, or the force of passion, or habit, a man may be led to act contrary to the judgment of his mind.

But

But goodness, or the shew of it, always gains the approbation of the mind, appears amiable, and is view'd with pleasure; and nothing else can render a character amiable.

No circumstances of distress can deface the beauty and amiableness of that fair and engaging character in which Goodness is the prevailing quality: on the contrary, the beauty of Virtue supports itself under a cloud; nay, shines with a peculiar lustre amidst surrounding calamities. There cannot be on earth a more engaging sight, than to behold a good man, steddily keeping up to that character amidst the greatest distresses; maintaining a noble struggle with adverse occurrences; and holding on his well-chosen course, amidst the hardest trials! How natural is it to be interested in such a character; and share in all his sufferings! Yet, tho' we could wish him more prosperous, we would not have him so at the expence of forgoing one tittle of his steddy virtue; but would rather see him as he is, than in a more easy condition with such a loss to his character. On the other hand, is not successful villany always beheld with abhorrence and indignation?

Suppose we neither receive, nor expect, the least benefit from the exercise of the good man's virtue; still we behold it with approbation: such amiable characters please,

not only when seen in life, and in our own time ; but even when barely represented to the fancy ; or read of, as having appeared long ago, and in remote corners of the world. Nay, our having received the greatest benefits, will not make the character of him who bestows them appear amiable, unless as it gives us a view of goodness in his nature and disposition, exciting him to this beneficence ; if otherwise, and we know that he bestows these benefits from some sinister principle, or out of mere regard to self-interest, we shall not *esteem* him, even while we *thank* him. Nor will our receiving the greatest hurt, make the character of him who produces it appear odious, unless the mischief he does appears to us to proceed from hatred, or some passion contrary to goodness. Nor would our being considerable gainers by a man's wickedness and knavery, hinder us from condemning the ill character : 'tis a common saying in such cases, that people *love the treason, but hate the traitor* ; but the real fact would be more exactly express'd by saying, that they *love the fruits of the treason, but hate the treason itself* ; seeing 'tis for no other reason they hate the traitor.

Goodness is always amiable, according to the degree and prevalency of it in any character. 'Tis therefore in the highest degree amiable, in its utmost perfection : nor

can we imagine a greater perfection of beauty and a more proper object of the highest delight, than “ a Being, in whom perfect
 “ and unalterable goodness is join’d with
 “ Almighty Power and unbounded Wisdom, Eternity, and Omnipresence; who
 “ is the fair and unspotted Original and
 “ Pattern of Goodness; and the Fountain
 “ of all good.” So that the *highest Love of God* is the proper and natural exercise of this principle, the *Love of Goodness*.

This sense of the beauty and amiableness of Goodness must particularly prompt us to pursue what is thus fair and amiable *in ourselves*; and avoid what is ugly and odious. This sense of Beauty and Deformity in life and manners, as it has a particular respect to our own affections and actions, is commonly call’d CONSCIENCE: for, at the same time that we are conscious to ourselves of what passes in our minds and what we do, and naturally have some remembrance of it and reflexion upon it afterwards; this consciousness and review naturally presents to us our temper and actions, under an agreeable or odious appearance. This sense of beauty and deformity in our own affections and actions, secretly admonishes us what to do, and what to avoid; and therefore was by the noble Ancients considered as an *inward Monitor*; and represented as the *Governing Principle* in our frame: and ’tis with respect

to this inward Monitor, that the great Apostle of the Gentiles says, *Rom. ii. 14, 15.* that, *the Gentiles which have not the Law, do by Nature the things contained in the Law; and these having not the Law, are a Law unto themselves: which shew the work of the Law written in their hearts; their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another.* Thus has the Wise and Good Author of our frame given us more *immediate* notices what to do and avoid; than those that are got by deductions of Reason, by maxims and rules form'd as the result of a long train of argument: and hence it is, that many men's first thoughts are their best, in these matters; those dictates of their consciences which prevent a deliberate enquiry, are oft-times more just than those conclusions that are the result of a deliberation, on which appetite or mistaken interest have a great influence. And Conscience not only dictates to us what to do or avoid; but prompts us to what is Good, and restrains us from what is Evil; and makes continual efforts to govern and direct our conduct: 'tis a plain and obvious indication of this Effort of Conscience; that it naturally interposes its judgment, without our setting ourselves deliberately to consult it; nor will it suffer us to act contrary to its dictates, without checking and reprovng us, and

rendering us uneasy ; till, by repeated and even violent struggles with it, and a custom of disregarding it, Men stifle and suppress those checks ; and, even thus, the most abandon'd are not able to silence it altogether.

From all this, 'tis evident, that we act contrary to our own Sense of things, and render ourselves deform'd and odious to ourselves ; when we act contrary to the bent of universal Benevolence, or of Love and resignation to the Deity. Let us now see,

III. How the matter stands with respect to our Interest; rightly understood ; and whether *that* would not likewise lead us to the same Temper and Conduct which kind affections prompt us to, and which our minds approve as fair and amiable ? Whether the most extensive Goodness, and Self-love conducted by just views of our best enjoyment, are not perfectly harmonious ; and 'tis only the report of deceitful spies that can raise a difference, or dissension, betwixt them.

However forward many are to make their estimate of happiness from the visible affluence of outward means of the gratification of Sense and Appetite ; yet this way of reckoning is no less false, than 'tis commonly unfavourable to Virtue. Methinks a very easy reflection on our own frame, or
even

even a slight attention to our experience, might suffice to convince us ; that our happiness depends far more on the temper of our minds, and what we *are* ourselves, than on our outward possessions and what we *have* ; and our greatest and most steady joys arise rather from our inward Affections, than from the greatest abundance of outward things : and pray, of what worth to us, is the largest *possession* of outward things ; but according to the inward *enjoyment* they afford us ? But the foundation of any inward enjoyment must be laid in the *temper* of the Mind itself : a Mind-ruffled and discomposed, will mar our pleasure of any sort ; and render us incapable of any enjoyment, had we ever so great an affluence of the outward means of that enjoyment.

It may, perhaps, on a superficial view of the matter, be thought ; that, as we are creatures endowed with various passions and appetites, our greatest enjoyment must lie in the gratifying of them all ; or, if we cannot gratify them all at once, 'tis best to follow the sway of any of them that chances to be uppermost, without giving ourselves the trouble to bring them under any government, but permitting their free and unconfin'd course, without controul ; and they may be without distinction reckon'd happy, who please themselves in the gratification of any of them ; as there is no rule for distin-

guishing in this case, seeing men's *tastes* of enjoyment *differ*. But, the very obvious observation, "that all our appetites cannot
 " be gratified at once; and that the in-
 " dulging some, and to a certain pitch, un-
 " avoidably interferes with the gratifying of
 " others;" must lead us to be sensible of the necessity of some rule in this case. For, let it be allowed that, as no natural passion was form'd in vain, they are all to be gratify'd, as far as they can consistently: yet, let *tastes differ* as they will, I think it will hardly be denied by any one, who reflects ever so little on his own experience, that the gratifying of some appetites and affections affords him greater satisfaction than gratifying others, which have perhaps been felt equally strong, but in complying with which he has found himself miserably disappointed of the enjoyment he promised himself. This very observation must lead us to this Rule in gratifying our Appetites; that, "if we would
 " have any settled and lasting enjoyment,
 " and have the greatest satisfaction we can
 " in life, we must guard against indulging
 " any one appetite or passion, so as to interfere with another which will afford us
 " greater and more lasting enjoyment." To keep this due Ballance amongst our inward Affections, must be the only method for the happiness of Life. Passion and Appetite are in themselves but blind guides; and we shall
 be

be oft-times and grossly deceived, if we judge what is *best* for us, by the meer strength of Desire, or Affection. Those natural appetites which lead us after the things that belong to our private advantage, are, no doubt, good and useful, when conducted by just views of what belongs to our welfare ; but if we permit them to swell to the utmost pitch, and take their fullest swing, without any direction or controul, they will frustrate their proper purpose, with regard to our own welfare ; and will work into passions perfectly unnatural, being such as conduce no more to our private advantage, than to the good of others ; but the stronger they grow, will the more effectually prove inward sources of perpetual disturbance and distress to us : so that, in the issue, this fancied *Liberty* will introduce the most wretched *Slavery*.

It would, therefore, be well for us, if, instead of imploying our chief care about the happiness of life, in enquiring what outward things are *best* for us (by the rule of being *most suitable to our Appetites*) and eagerly pursuing after them ; we bestowed more of our pains in considering what appetites and affections were *best* for us to cherish in ourselves ; and would heartily bend our endeavours to improve these in our minds, and be more constantly imployed in exercising them.

If

If there are certain Affections which, in their own nature and exercise,

(1.) Afford the greatest *inward* Enjoyment ;

(2.) Put us in special circumstances of advantage, for obtaining the most considerable *outward* means of satisfaction ; and,

(3.) Preserve our minds in that disposition, which is requisite to give us a relish of any Enjoyment :

If, on the other hand, the impairing of this temper, or the prevalency of a contrary one, tends to give us inward pain and disturbance ; and renders us incapable of enjoyment, even amidst the greatest affluence of the outward means of it :

Then, it must always be *our true Interest*, to cherish and exercise that Disposition which is the inward foundation of steady Enjoyment ; and to check and cure every branch of that Disposition which is the inward source of woe and disturbance.

Let us then enquire,

(1.) What Affections they are, the exercise of which affords the greatest *inward* Enjoyment. And may I not appeal to all who have ever felt in themselves any thing of the exercise of kind and social Affections, Love, Compassion, Generosity or Gratitude ; whether the exercise of them is not naturally accompanied with the greatest Delight ? They afford an original joy, which
does

does not require any preceding pain, to raise it, or give it a relish. The pleasure of those passions which respect our private advantage is, in a great measure, confin'd to the *gratification* of them ; they give us pain, when we cannot gratify them : but, even when love and compassion are unsuccessful, still we are pleased to feel them stirring and prevailing in our hearts : and, even when these *kind affections* lead us through a series of anxiety and concern, pity and sympathy, there is a secret pleasure attending those disturbances ; we hug and indulge them, and are unwilling to be deprived of them any way, but by a Joy arising from the Success of those for whom we were concern'd, or the relief of those whom we pitied. Far more are these Affections delightful when successful ; when we actually afford help and succour, bestow benefits, and spread happiness around us. The more large and extensive the exercise of the kind affections is ; the greater is the joy accompanying it : how great the joy of a generous and extensive good Affection to the universal Weal of the whole rational World ? especially if, from a persuasion of the care of an Universal Governour, who is perfectly wise and powerful, as well as good, we are satisfied that this general happiness is secured and taken care of, amidst all changes and revolutions, and all *seeming or partial*
and

and temporary mixtures of *Evil* in the present imperfect and unfinished state of things : what joy must this naturally afford a good man ? What chearful *resignation* must it inspire, as to every thing that belongs to his own particular interest for the present, which is swallowed up in the Universal Good, in which he is satisfied he shall find his own greatest enjoyment ? What delight and joy does the devout mind feel, in contemplating and adoring the amiable Perfections of God ? especially when thus animated to form his own mind and conduct more and more after the Model of that exalted pattern of moral excellence ! How delightful to view His extensive Goodness ; to contemplate the Wisdom of His conduct ; to consider one's self as a true member and subject of His kingdom, and under the care of that Almighty King ! What delight does the generous heart feel, in sharing the joys of others, and beholding them happy ; especially when 'tis by his own means, and when he receives a new and repeated sense of happiness from the symptoms of that joy himself has produced ? Tho' we lessen our *share* of outward things by communicating them ; yet the *enjoyment* is heighten'd by this Participation. Such are the satisfactions that *immediately* accompany the exercise of kind and pious affections.

This

This pleasure is exceedingly heighten'd by the approbation of the conscious Mind, and by the fair and amiable appearance of these good Affections. The pleasure of kind affections is not confin'd to the immediate exercise ; as the pleasures of sense, for the most part, are ; but remains in the mind ; and returns every time we review the amiable affections, every time we look back on the good actions done. What tranquillity and enjoyment arises from Peace of Mind * ! Can we imagine a greater, and more steady joy, than flows from a constant series of easy and self-approving reflections, in which vanity and partial fondness have no share ; but that temper and conduct the mind approves in one's self, would be equally approv'd wherever beheld ? What further satisfaction must it afford the mind of a good man, that, as a conduct so beneficial and so amiable tends to procure a fair reputation, and recommends to general esteem ; he is conscious to himself of the deserv'd esteem and love of others ? He enjoys, not their feign'd applauses or partial commendations ; but their just esteem, their hearty love and gratitude. What a transcendent delight to look upon himself as approv'd by the great and good Governour of the World, who *loves goodness and righteousness* ? The very

* Prov. iii. 17. Isa. xxxii. 17.

consciousness of acting under the view and approbation of such a perfect Judge of excellency, by whom *actions are justly weigh'd*, what Joy must it afford !

Such are the inward enjoyments of a good and pious mind. But, let us consider,

(2.) What circumstances of advantage these kind and pious affections put us in, for obtaining the most considerable *outward* means of satisfaction. Religion and virtue not only allow us, but oblige us, to use all methods of industry, for procuring outward advantages, that are consistent with piety and goodness: and these honest arts are found, in experience, to be the surest ways of thriving; when violence and oppression are soon disappointed of their purpose, and no arts of fraud and deceit can hold out long *. Piety and goodness also afford a peculiar security for the peaceable acquisition and possession of outward things; as they tend to procure us the good-will and assistance of others about us, and to secure us from their jealousy and opposition †. Let us consider,

(3.) What a relish kind and pious affections tend to give us for *any* enjoyment. A mind free from inward bitterness and disgust, and from all uneasy and paining reflections, is, in some measure, necessary to

* Prov. x. 9. and xii. 19. † 1 Pet. iii. 13.

our satisfaction of any sort, or from any thing. Now 'tis the exercise of kind affections, that most effectually banishes all those fretful and galling passions, which ruffle the temper and disturb the mind ; and produces that inward peace and tranquillity, which is necessary to any true enjoyment. Temperance and Sobriety, in governing our private affections and desires, do most directly, and naturally contribute to our bodily health and strength ; and also to our inward ease, and the contentment of our minds ; without which, there can be no enjoyment : nor is this inward quiet and tranquillity to be obtained by the greatest abundance of outward things ; the most affluent state being found the most exposed to the greatest disturbances from every little cross accident, or disappointment. It will be found in experience, that the greatest enjoyment, and most lively relish of the gratifications of sense themselves, is to be obtained and preserv'd by such a moderate and temperate use of them, as is consistent with piety and goodness, and does not interfere with the enjoyments of a higher kind already mention'd. And thus we have considered, what a natural foundation of happiness and enjoyment piety and goodness is. But,

On the other hand : the workings of such irregular passions as are contrary to piety
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and

and goodness, together with the uneasy reflections which attend them, make up the greatest misery. The workings of anger, envy, resentment, revenge, and the like unsocial passions, raise most violent tumults, and produce inward torments, in a man's own breast: they render the mind ugly and deform'd, so that it cannot bear the view of itself; and when in their height and strength, they so possess the soul, as to exclude every relieving thought: they toss a man out of one state of inward torment into another; from the torment of *resentment* till the passion is gratify'd, to the tortures of *remorse* quickly succeeding the unnatural gratification. Other selfish passions have a more flattering and agreeable appearance: but, as all the pleasure of them depends upon the gratification of them, how liable are we to be disappointed in that pursuit? And how great is the anguish of that disappointment oft-times felt; especially if no relief arises from enjoyments of a better kind? And, so far as these passions lead us aside from the paths of goodness, and carry us to any thing hurtful to others; it may be evident, from what has been already observ'd, that they deprive us of greater enjoyments, than the gratification of them will afford, and expose us to greater woes than can be compensated by it. Impiety and neglect of God deprive us of all those enjoyments and

com-

comforts, which arise from a regard to his Being and Providence; and which are found of the greatest use to relieve the mind, when it stands in special need of support. How uneasy and disturb'd must his mind oft-times be, in such a mixed state of things as the present, and under such disasters as all men are unavoidably expos'd to, who is regardless of the hand of a wise and good Providence; or frets and murmurs under the Dispensations of it? And how can he miss to be often expos'd to fretfulness and murmuring under many outward events; who, instead of seeking his happiness in those *inward enjoyments*, which no outward changes can rob him of against his will; has his heart so bent on his own *outward affairs*, that he is regardless of the welfare of others, and the general good?

Further: what inward pain, and remorse, must naturally accompany that remembrance of his own temper, and reflection upon his actions, which a wicked and impious man cannot miss to have? Who can express the anguish of his mind, who cannot reflect on his temper and conduct, but he beholds in himself something horrid and shocking? who sees himself justly despised and hated by those about him? What terrors must seize his mind, who is fill'd with a just sense of the displeasure of Heaven? which a wicked man may well be in fear

of, even from God's love of goodness and of the welfare of his creation, tho' there was no express denunciation of it. How disturb'd must be the condition of his soul, who is continually haunted by the Spectres of his guilt; and oft-times fill'd with just fears, both from men and from the Deity, and even with imaginary ones? What enjoyment can such a one have, even in the most flattering circumstances of fortune, and amidst the greatest abundance of outward things! This is the *natural* portion of a wicked and vicious man.

It may perhaps be thought, that, however *in the main* a benevolent and pious temper and behaviour tends to our greatest enjoyment; yet, *in some particular cases*, it may be our interest to act a contrary part. It must be own'd, that one may gain some particular outward advantages, by forsaking the ways of piety and goodness; and may sustain some outward losses, by adhering to them: and yet this is far from being so often the case; as a man under the government of fancy and appetite may, from *their* suggestions, be induced to think. But these *outward advantages*, obtain'd by any vicious action, are always attended with an *inward loss*, which is not to be compensated by them; as *outward losses* attending the exercise of piety and goodness, are accompany'd
with,

with, and compensated by *inward advantage and improvement*. Every deviation from the paths of goodness breaks in upon that tone and turn of the temper, which is the inward foundation of tranquillity and happiness; and introduces such a disorder and corruption into the mind, as we know not where it may stop: every partial disorder within tends to an universal one, and is a part of it; and is naturally accompany'd with part of the mischief flowing from it, tho' it may not be so plainly felt at the first: every known and wilful departure from the paths of uprightness, must make way for inward reproach and remorse: nor can any one know what length the mischief may go he does himself, when he ventures to break that peace of mind, which he knows not when, or if ever, he shall wholly recover: and he who ventures all this loss, for any outward gains, makes but a sad bargain: even in this sense, there is a great deal of force in that warm and home question of our Saviour; *What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul* * ? 'Tis a vain imagination to think, that if we adhere to goodness and honesty, in most instances, we may safely adventure to deviate from it *in some*: this is to make life a perpetual inconsistency. What settled peace

* Matt. xvi. 26.

can there be within; what regular tranquillity; what steady enjoyment in life; when a man's heart is divided, and he is at perpetual variance with himself, condemning at one time what he approves at another? The only way to settled peace and undisturbed enjoyment, is by steady uprightness; by *one* fix'd and considerate resolution; which, once well form'd, must be steadily kept to, and all the passions and appetites brought under subjection to it.

I thought it needful to be at the more pains to state this matter fully and clearly; because lessening the *present and natural* advantages of piety and goodness, and magnifying its present distresses, is not only a thing industriously labour'd at by the enemies to the cause of virtue and goodness; but they are even seconded in this attempt, unwarily I hope, by some who have thought, it seems, to serve the cause of Religion and Revelation, by representing the present condition of virtue as most melancholy and calamitous; and with this preposterous view have join'd in the cry of *calling the proud happy*; and setting forth the state of prosperous vice as a condition to be envy'd, “ were it not
 “ for the awe of a *hard master*, who, it seems,
 “ grudges us this happiness!” But, what is there that should lead us to such unfavourable views of the *present portion* of piety and
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goodness? Is it the share good men have in the common calamities of human life? But sure these do not more befall good men than bad men: the most that can be said of them is, that they fall *promiscuously* on the good and bad: a circumstance which may hinder the *difference* betwixt them, from being so *conspicuous* to all the world, but that the consideration of the wisdom and goodness of the Universal Governor, may afford us ground to expect it shall one day be more so; and this may render a Revelation, which assures us it shall be so, on that account, highly credible: yet sure this can never make the present condition of a good man in any respect worse, than that of a bad man; seeing common calamities fall equally upon both; and cannot, certainly, lie so heavy on the good man as on the other, but must sit easier and lighter upon him, so far as he is in the exercise of his piety and goodness. Is it, then, the peculiar hardships and sufferings good men endure, on account of their goodness, or for adhering to a cause which their virtue obliges them to maintain, that makes us think so unfavourably of their present condition? But, have they not their peculiar supports too? There is a *strength and force*, as well as beauty, belonging to piety and goodness, so far as they prevail in the temper and conduct, whence the name of *Virtue* is deriv'd to them: the joys they afford
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tend to strengthen the temper ; and give a force to the mind, to bear up under oppositions and hardships : there is a firmness and steddiness, that is of their very nature ; and a great deal of their proper exercise lies in forbearing pleasures, and enduring pains, in the maintenance of a steddy resolution, in preserving that temper, and keeping up to that conduct in which the soul finds its greatest enjoyment. 'Tis not, certainly, any loss or hardship that may be sustained in such a noble course, that can lie heavy upon *his* mind, who considers these as befalling him not without the sovereign disposal of a perfectly wise and good Master, who sees meet so to exercise him ; who regards them as the appointed tryal of his Virtue, by which it is to be exercised, brightned, and improv'd ; who considers the losses he bravely sustains, and the sufferings which with a steddy mind he endures, as the price at which he purchases strength and freedom of mind, and the mastery of himself ; greater firmness and constancy in a good cause ; and consequently an enjoyment of inward peace and satisfaction, yet more uninterrupted, and more above the reach of disturbance ! But, suppose the sufferings of a good man come to the greatest extremity, and he endures the sharpest persecutions. Why, this is far from being so often the case, as may be imagin'd : ordinarily, a man's piety and goodness itself
affords

affords him a peculiar security against the ill-will or the ill designs of others : 'tis commonly from lust of worldly power or wealth, that the violence of prosecutors arises ; and 'tis, at least, an imagin'd opposition of worldly interests, that makes the good man fail under it ; while his being on the side to which his virtue obliges him to adhere, (but which his persecutors, perhaps, call heresy) is but the pretended cause of their persecuting him ; and were this pretence wanting, others might be found to patronize that cruelty and oppression, which, in reality, has its rise from other causes. And, in the case of such sufferings, even setting aside future rewards, a good man may have the prospect of a great deal of good to be done by his firmly enduring them ; to which with pleasure he sacrifices private advantages ; and even, perhaps, a *life*, which, prolong'd with the abandoning so glorious a cause, must be to him a wretched and miserable one. And, if 'tis most delightful to behold a good man maintaining a noble struggle with adversity, and holding on his well-chosen course amidst the worst shocks of calamity ; what a vast joy must it be, for a man's own mind to applaud him, as the good and steady man, firm and unmov'd in the best of causes ! If *peradventure for one good man some would even dare to die** ; must not a truly good man

* Rom. v. 7.

die, with pleasure, for the good of mankind, or of his country ; or for the advantage of that cause, which he looks upon as the cause of God, and of the happiness of mankind ? And, all the while, in the unequal comparison that is made betwixt the present condition of a good and bad man, there seems to be very little account made of the *peculiar calamities* which attend *the vicious*, and that commonly in the most prosperous outward circumstances ; calamities far *greater*, as they immediately affect the mind and soul ; and which more *constantly* attend the vicious, as arising from the inward temper itself ; than any outward calamities which *sometimes* befall the good and virtuous. Did we fairly take the *inward* condition, as well as *outward* circumstances, both of the good and bad into the account, we might see abundant ground to conclude ; not only that, supposing both on an equal footing as to outward things, there could be no question which had the greatest enjoyment : but also that, supposing the bad man had commonly the advantage in outward respects, yet the inward enjoyments of a good man will compensate his outward losses and afflictions ; whereas the greatest affluence of outward things will not compensate the want of inward peace : and, however dazzling an appearance the splendour of greatness, the elevations of fortune, and the blandishments of

of sense, may make to those who look only on the outside of things ; they can afford but very slender enjoyment to one void of peace within, disturb'd by the workings of irregular passions and the remorse of a guilty mind.

So that Piety and Virtue is, in its own nature, always, the Good ; and Vice the Ill ; of every man : that temper and conduct which is *best* for *others* about us ; is also *best* for *ourselves* : and so far as we are wanting to promote the good of our neighbours and of mankind ; we are so far wanting to ourselves, and cease to promote our own good and happiness.

From all which the general conclusion follows, with the greatest clearness and evidence : “ That there is a manifest difference betwixt one kind of disposition and conduct of men, and another ; according to which the One is Good, the Other Evil ; even tho’ no Law did enjoin the one, or forbid the other : and this difference is as certain and unchangeable, as that betwixt light and darkness, a bitter and sweet taste ; the one no more arises from, or is alterable by, the meer Will and pleasure of any, than the other.”

From what has been discours’d on this Argument it may appear : That, it is doing most useful service to the publick, and to

particular persons, and even transgressors themselves; for every one, in his proper station, and as he has opportunity, to use the best methods in his power for putting a stop to the torrent of vice, and promoting a Reformation of Manners: and that they who join together in Societies for this purpose, that they may the better be assisting to one another in it, are engaged in a good cause.

What pity is it, if so good a design is ever exposed to reproach; by a wrong, or indiscreet management of it? This, therefore, I hope You, who are engag'd in Reforming Societies, will carefully guard against, in all instances.

There is one caution, particularly; which seems to me of such importance, that I hope you'll forgive me if I cannot but put you in mind of it: namely, that tho' there are other methods proper to be used for reclaiming our neighbours from any thing that is amiss in them, as instruction, persuasion, and the influence of a good example; yet the method of punishing offenders, is to be confined to such crimes of the vicious as are hurtful to others about them, or disturb the peace of human society. And therefore, you are carefully to beware, that, under pretence of punishing crimes, you do not unjustly restrain men from the free exercise of their natural and unalienable right of en-
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quiring for themselves in affairs of religion ; and acting agreeably to the light of their own minds ; so far as it does not lead them to commit any matter of wrong or wicked leudness, by which their neighbours are injured, or their natural or civil rights invaded. It would certainly be a most awkward and inconsistent thing ; if they who set themselves to bear down and suppress vice ; should, under that colour, set themselves to suppress by methods of violence the exercise of a right, without the exercise of which in some measure there could be no virtue ; the right of Conscience, and private judgment in matters of religion : how absurd and inconsistent would it be, if the members of societies for reformation of manners should themselves, and pretending to act in that character too, be guilty of the greatest iniquity and injustice ? should become *persecutors and injurious* ? or permit themselves to be made the instruments or patrons of any motion or attempt to deprive their fellow-subjects of any of their valuable liberties and privileges ; or infringe any of those natural or civil rights, in the possession and exercise of which 'tis the proper office of the Civil Magistrate to protect and defend all Good Subjects ?

Among many evils, and characters of degeneracy, to be *lamented* in the present age ; there is one very great blessing, which all

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good men have ground to *rejoice in* : that the principles of liberty, the rights of conscience and private judgment, are better understood, and more regarded, than (for any thing I know) they have ever been in former times ; and I believe I may adventure to say no less, if not more, in *Great Britain*, than in any other Country under the Sun. While this happiness continues among us, as I hope it will continue, spread, and grow ; especially while we are under the protection of a government which, in the making of Laws and the administration of justice, acts with such a sacred regard to *these rights* ; we may hope that valuable improvements, in all useful knowledge, shall take place ; while the great barrs against a free and impartial enquiry, arising from a regard to worldly interest and the fear of man's judgment, are removed : and when truth in religion and morality obtains a fair tryal, reason and argument free scope, we may expect that impostures of all kinds shall be more and more detected ; the kingdom of darkness, which has been chiefly supported by methods of violence, and the interposal of the secular arm in affairs of conscience, shall be more and more weaken'd ; false reasoning, and ill-plac'd raillery and buffoonery, will not long stand the test, but one time or other expose themselves ; and the folly and absurdity

dity of those shall more and more appear, *who call evil good, and good evil, &c.*

Only it concerns us to take great care that *we use not our liberty for a cloak of licentiousness** : that we don't make use of that liberty we have, and ought to have, of acting *agreeably* to the dictates of our consciences, *without fear of man's judgment* ; as a pretence to cover over acting *contrary* to the dictates of our consciences, *without fear of the righteous judgment of God*. If such licentiousness ever hurries men on to the committing matter of wrong or wicked leudness against others ; the Governing powers in civil society, who are guardians of the publick peace, have a right, and 'tis their duty, to restrain it by proper animadversions and punishments suited to the nature of the offence.

But there are other methods, as I have already observ'd, proper to be used by all, as they have opportunity, for reclaiming their neighbours from whatever is wrong in their temper or behaviour : the methods of instruction, and persuasion ; and the influence of a good and engaging example. In all these it particularly becomes the members of reforming societies to show themselves *patterns of good Works†* : and 'tis the business of every good man, to second their laudable endeavours. Particularly as the

* 1 Pet. ii. 16. † Tit. ii. 7.

most effectual way of introducing and promoting a general reformation, is for every man to reform One ; and a good example is, by the blessing of God, of great influence for gaining and reclaiming offenders ; every one may contribute some part towards a general reformation of manners, by amending whatever is amiss in himself, and showing forth in an exemplary behaviour the beauty and amiableness of holiness and goodness : and it especially becomes the Disciples of JESUS, *to depart from iniquity*† ; and *to let their light so shine before men, that they may see their good works, and glorify their Father who is in heaven*||.

It would also contribute very much to the promoting a general Reformation of Manners ; if Masters of families would take such care, as their place enables and obliges them to do, of the manners of their domesticks ; particularly, by a more careful and diligent practice of that important, but much neglected, duty of family-instruction : and if Parents, and others to whom the education of young ones is committed, would lay out their main care in forming their Minds. This is the foundation on which an effectual Reformation of manners must be built. There is nothing, indeed, has a more dismal aspect upon the rising age ; than the general disso-

† 2 Tim. ii. 19. || Mat. v. 16.

luteness of the Youth : this (together with a certain Vanity of distinguishing themselves some way, when a regard to a valuable reputation is gone) prompts them to swallow and espouse the most loose and dissolute principles ; and lays them open to the snares laid for them by any designing seducer, who will favour them with a shallow argument, a merry story, or a silly jest ; which they may have in readiness to oppose to any sober admonition or grave argument laid before them by others, or any remaining checks of their own consciences.

I cannot help ascribing this general Corruption of Youth, in a great measure, to the gross and general neglect of a rational and virtuous Education. How many, alas ! take more care of the training of their Dogs and Horses, than of their Children and Heirs ? And, even among those who are not altogether careless and negligent of the education of their Children, how much of that concern which should be laid out in forming their Minds, is altogether spent in teaching them things that are of no use to them in the way of life for which they are designed ; or, at best, training them up in accomplishments which are trifling and inconsiderable, in comparison of a good and virtuous mind ? And I speak it with very great concern ; I cannot help being apprehensive that the looseness and debauchery so much lamented

in many, who are observed to have had the benefit of a Religious Education ; may often be found to proceed in a great measure from that very Education itself, as 'tis managed : for I may appeal to attentive observers, whether that which obtains the name of a religious education, does not often turn out in such a shape as this ? The care of Parents, or Instructors, about the religious part of Education, is almost wholly spent in inculcating upon young ones the *Shibboleth* of a Party ; making them acquainted with, and instilling into them a regard for, the particular doctrines or peculiar forms of their own Sect ; in which there may oft-times be found a mixture of things absurd or trifling ; which yet are inculcated with as great earnestness, and by the same methods, with the most weighty and important points ; while great pains are taken to inspire into them at the same time a strong aversion to those of another way of thinking, and that by methods which even a Childish capacity may discern to be contrary to equity and charity : and instead of forming their minds to a rational sense of Good and Evil, a taste and relish for true Piety and Virtue, upon such principles as will stand the test of a most strict examination ; any instances of good practice they are taught, are recommended and enforced by meer authority ; or by the awe of future rewards and punishments ;

ments ; which, as they are made use of without ever explaining the nature and justice of them, cannot *directly* contribute to promote a liberal piety and virtue, a relish for true goodness and favour of honesty in the mind : while, in all the offices of religion to which they are accustomed they are *detained before the Lord** against their will ; forced to run the round of certain forms, they know no good in ; no care being taken to instill into them a just sense and liking of true piety and devotion, or a regard to any valuable purpose in such observances save only the pleasing of their Parents ; whose devotion and piety, at the same time, they observe to be exerted in such a way as tends to give them no amiable and inviting, but rather a disgusting and forbidding, view of it : and all the while, their kind and generous affections are rather check'd, than forward'd and improv'd ; while every selfish passion and appetite, instead of being regularly check'd and corrected, is rather in many cases humour'd and encourag'd ; only the exercise of them in some particular instances is restrained, not by any rational endeavours to cure the wrong turn in the temper, but by positive precepts as to such and such particular instances ; and by an awe and constraint, which the young one knows he shall one time get rid of, and longs to be delivered from.

* 1 Sam. xxi. 7.

Is this to *train up a Child in the way that he should go*? What must be expected to be the consequence, when a young thing, with the small portion of common sense such an Education has left him, and with warm blood and strong passions, gets out into an ensnaring World? when a creature thus (neglected, shall I say, or rather) with great care misguided, comes to be emancipated from such fetters, and get rid of such awkward restraints? when the raw unform'd Youth comes once (as, perhaps, with a scanty portion of understanding and very slender exercise of reason he may) to discover a flaw or weakness in some things that, it may be, he has been taught to look upon as equally sacred with God and Virtue, Goodness and Honesty; must it not be natural for him upon such a discovery, with the concurrence of wild passions used to no regular government, to draw very general and hasty conclusions? to throw up at once every thing he has been formerly taught; and which his Education has furnish'd him with nothing to say for, more than for some things he has now found to be trifling and absurd? to abandon a course which, both by instruction and example, he has been taught to be troublesome and painful; and betake himself to a way of life which his Appetites tell him is most delightful, but from which hitherto he has been rigorously restrained?

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I'm afraid we may despair of seeing any general reformation among the Youth, 'till such gross faults in their Education be amended : and till the first and chief care in training up of young ones be imployed in forming their Minds right. Great pains must be taken to instill into them, according as their capacities gradually open, some understanding of the nature of true goodness and virtue ; good thoughts of God, and of the obligations we are under to him ; just notions of the nature of *pure and undefiled Religion*, as 'tis founded in a sense of the unalterable difference betwixt moral Good and Evil, and the belief of a perfectly good God ; together with some just understanding of the natural tendency and influence of true piety and virtue prevailing in the heart, to the present improvement, pleasure and satisfaction of the mind, and to the settled peace and tranquility of the whole life. And with this care to inform their judgments, must be joined the most careful and engaging endeavours, to form their minds to a taste and relish of true goodness, virtue and piety : not only by describing to them, as clearly and fully as their capacities will allow, some of the inward enjoyments arising from them ; but also by putting them upon reflecting on any experience or feeling of that kind they themselves may have had, and leading them gently and by winning methods to make tri-
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al in some instances ; and thus gradually training them to some experience of this sort* : but above all, by the influence of a good example, affording them an easy, familiar and engaging view of the Beauty of holiness and goodness ; such an example of exact conformity to the several rules of *pure and undefiled religion*, as may set true piety, and the several virtues to which it animates, before their eyes in its native amiableness ; and show them that it is a most kind and benign, a most happy and comfortable, thing. In all which, great care must be taken to suit the manner of instruction and persuasion to the gradual opening of their capacities, to their tempers and the several inclinations they early discover ; heedfully catching at all advantages afforded by the natural kindness and tenderness of their tempers, and any little sparks of goodness, and a sense of what is fair and beautiful in manners, they show of their own accord.

Perhaps I have enlarged upon this Subject, beyond the proportion which falls to its share in such a discourse as this : but, methinks, not beyond its Importance, to a General Reformation of Manners.

* See above, pag. 168, and 170, &c.

Publick Virtue recommended.

A

S E R M O N

Preached in the

High-Church of EDINBURGH,

O N

THURSDAY, MAY 8th, 1746.

A T T H E

Opening of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY
of the Church of SCOTLAND.

By WILLIAM WISHART, D. D.
Principal of the College of EDINBURGH.

The SECOND EDITION, with some Additions.

No.

100

100

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T O

The Right Honourable,

The E A R L of L E V E N,

His M A J E S T Y's

High Commissioner

T O T H E

GENERAL ASSEMBLY of
the Church of SCOTLAND:

This S E R M O N is most respect-
fully Dedicated by

His G R A C E's

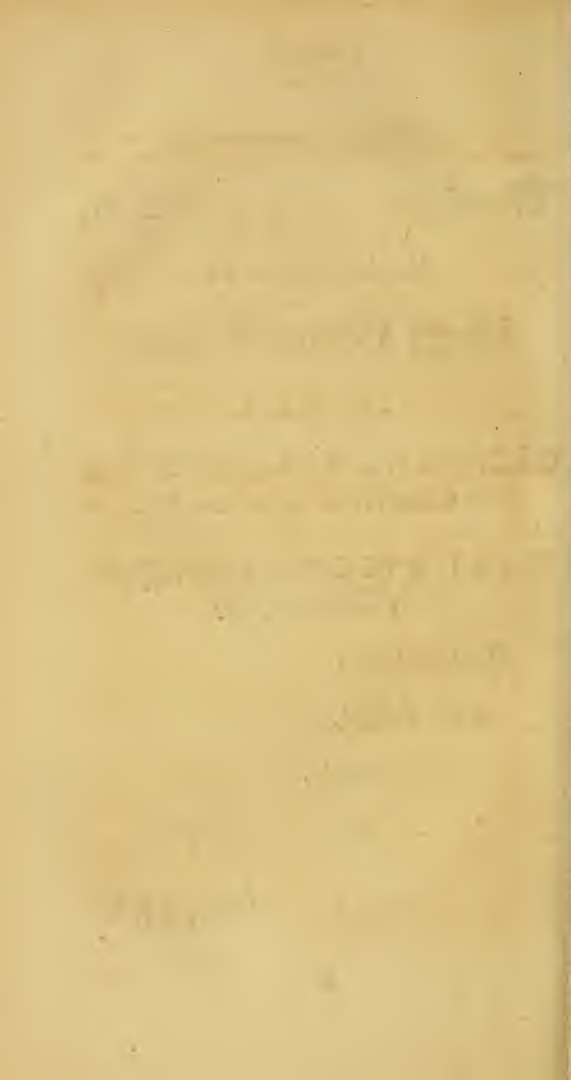
most obliged,

most humble,

and most obedient Servant,

WILL. WISHART.

X



PSAL. cxxii. 6—9.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions sakes, I will now say, peace be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good.

THAT I may discourse on these Words, suitably to the Occasion of our present Meeting, I shall consider the Psalmist as, in them, setting an Example to us; shewing for *whom* our great Concern is to be exercised: What *Blessings* we are to be concerned for, on their Behalf: And what *Ways* we are to express this Concern: And, in fine, as suggesting some proper *Motives*, to excite us to it.

IN all which, I mean not so much to take upon me to give Instruction and Direction to you, my *Reverend Fathers and Brethren*; as to offer some Hints, which, by the Blessing of GOD, may be useful to his People here assembled: And that under your Observation and Correction.

To begin then,

I. FOR *whom* are we taught, by the Example of the Psalmist here, to have the most hearty Concern?

THE Royal Psalmist *David*, in praying for the Peace of *Jerusalem*, the Capital City of the Kingdom, under its Name expresses his Concern for the Nation; as is evident from these Words, * *there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David*; i. e. "There is held the supreme Council" and Judicatory of the Nation; there is "the Seat of the Throne, and the Residence of the Royal Family;" and, *peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces*; i. e. to those who dwelt within its Walls, and inhabited its Palaces; who were capable of feeling and tasting the Blessings of Peace and Prosperity.

BUT, as *Jerusalem* was the City which God had chosen, to put his name there; it was an Emblem of the Church of God. And that, in this religious View, it was a special Object of the holy Psalmist's Concern, appears from these Words, † *Thither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord*; and ‡ *for the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good*.

So that the Example of the Psalmist, as it is applicable to us, calls us to the most hearty

* Ver. 5. † Ver. 4. ‡ Ver. 9.

Concern for our native Country, and for the Church of GOD, especially among ourselves.

THAT *Society* is natural to Men, and necessary to their Improvement and Perfection ; both the natural Abilities, and the natural Weaknesses of Mankind concur to shew.

THE Powers we are furnished with ; the Affections of our Hearts ; the Circumstances of mutual Dependence, in which we are placed ; and the Opportunities afforded us, of giving mutual Assistance ; do *all* speak us formed by the great Parent of Mankind, not to stand, each of us, by himself ; or improve alone : but to be *all* Members of one Body ; every Part of which is preserved, and its Welfare promoted, by mutual Aids : To be Citizens of the World, as one common City, under the Divine Government.

BUT, the general Obligations to Kindness, Sympathy, and Help towards any of Mankind, as we have Opportunity ; do, in a special Manner, oblige us to bear a Goodwill, and do kind Offices, to those with whom we are joined by special Ties ; to whom we have peculiar Opportunities of doing Good ; with whom, especially, we enjoy common Privileges, or run common Dangers.

THE Defence of Men's Persons and Possessions against lawless Power, and the securing their Enjoyment of the Means of Prosperity, require that they be formed into par-

ticular Societies or States, each under some one Government ; which, whatever its particular Form be, has for its sole End, and should have for its supreme Law, the general Safety and Welfare. Where Men have not the Happiness of *such a Constitution*, they can scarce be reckoned to have a *Country* to be concerned for : But, where they are blessed with it, the Prosperity of that Constitution, and the Welfare of that Society, must be the special Object of the hearty Concern of All its Members.

OUR native Country, then, is not so much that *Spot of Earth* on which we have our Birth ; as that *Society of Men* in Conjunction with whom we are born, under the same Government and Laws ; Laws formed for the Welfare of every Person, as best suits the general Good of the whole Society : Laws by which we are protected and defended, in the Enjoyment of our just Liberties and Properties ; and from which we derive various Advantages, long before we are capable of making any Return, or Acknowledgment for them.

THE true Love of our Country is not a Fondness for any particular and distinguishing Customs, good or bad ; but a Concern for its real Welfare : not a feigned Concern ; or occasionally-affected, to serve a Turn, or accommodate ourselves to certain Times ; like that of *Summer-day-friends* ; or those of
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whom we read, that, when **the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day, many of the people of the land became Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell upon them*: but hearty and uniform; at all Times, amidst publick Calamities, as well as publick Prosperity. It is a special Branch of the Love of Mankind: never to be detached from, far less set in Opposition to, that general Affection, of which it is a Branch.

BUT; as our Concern for ourselves, so our Goodwill to our Neighbours, must be low and narrow; if it is confined to our outward Affairs, and temporal Welfare; and does not (as becomes Creatures formed for higher Enjoyments, and a more lasting Duration) extend to the Improvement and Perfection of our Minds and Hearts; and the advancing of our Happiness not only in this World, but in a better.

THE Propensity of Men to seek after Society, in every Thing; and their Experience of Benefit from it, in all sorts of Affairs; do plainly show a natural Obligation upon them to associate for Religious Purposes; and to be mutually assisting to one another in these, their most important, Concerns. And all *voluntary Associations* that are harmless to the Publick, may justly claim

* Esther viii. 17.

the Protection ; if beneficial to it, the Encouragement, of the Laws. Particularly,

WHERE either Nature, or wise Choice and Institution, has brought People together into Societies for other Purposes ; there is a Fitness and Propriety in their being jointly exercised, in most grateful Acknowledgments to their common Parent ; and earnest Petitions to the Author of all their Blessings. Besides, that mutual Charity should lead us to thank GOD for the Blessings Others receive, and to beg of Him the Blessings needful for them, as well as ourselves : there are, in all such Societies, common Blessings, and common Wants ; the Sense of which is most properly expressed in joint Acknowledgments, and Supplications to their great and general Benefactor. There is, therefore, a Natural obligation, not only for Family-worship ; but for larger Societies joining together in more publick Exercises of Devotion ; and in attending on Religious Instruction, which is a Thing of the greatest Importance and Necessity. That every Thing, in such Societies, may be managed in an orderly Way, so as to answer the great Purposes of Religion, and preserve the Manners of the several Members of them conformed to its Dictates, will require a particular Discipline ; distinct from Civil Government ; and not of the same magisterial and coercive Kind ;

Kind ; as Religion, from its Nature, must be free from *the Commandments of Men*.

BUT, as the modelling of Religion, and the Worship of GOD, is not absolutely to be left to the Imaginations of weak and corrupt Men ; it has pleased GOD, in all Ages, to take the Direction of this Matter into his own Hands, by express Revelation. Accordingly ; * *God, who, at sundry times, and in divers manners, spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets ; hath, in these last days, spoken unto us by his son ; whom he hath appointed heir of all things.* † He hath purchased a Church with his own Blood : ‡ GOD hath raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right-hand ; and hath given him to be the head over all things to the church ; which is his body, whereof he alone is Head ; his Kingdom, in which he alone is King : A Society to be governed only by his Laws ; and have all its Institutions of Worship prescribed by him. He has taken Care, it should be preserved an orderly and regular Society ; by instituting in it a Government, distinct from that of the Civil Magistrate : So quite different, in its Purposes, and the Methods of its Execution ; that these two Powers, in the proper Exercise of their different Functions, can never interfere, or clash : i. e. if neither the Civil Power meddles with the Admini-

* Heb. i. 1, 2. † Acts xx. 28. ‡ Eph. i. 20, 22, 23.

stration of God's Word, nor the Church with the Power of the Sword ; if, neither the Secular Arm interposes with Civil Penalties, in the Affairs of Conscience and Religion ; nor, the Preaching and Discipline of the Church be ever prostituted, to serve any other Interest than that of Christ's Kingdom. The Government which Christ hath instituted in his Church, is purely Ministerial †, including no Dominion over the Faith or Consciences of Men ; where the highest Name of Power, and that with which some have made the greatest Noise, is, * in plain *English*, that of *Overseers* : A Government, not confined into the Hands of the Pastors of the Church, (or those who have confined to themselves the Denomination of *Clergy*) but, wherein the Members of the Church have a Share ; as being equally under the Obligation with their Pastors, to *withdraw* themselves † *from every brother that walketh disorderly* : The Weapons of its Exercise are not the Sword or the Axe ; but earnest Exhortations ; serious Admonitions ; and Rebukes *with* all Authority ‡, (enforced by the Authority of the Great LORD of the Church, without which they may be justly reckoned blunt Thunder ;) and in fine, *withdrawing from*, (or removing from Communion with them, in those sacred Institutions which are

† 2 Cor. i. 24. * Επισκοποι. † 2 Thes. iii. 6.
‡ Tit. ii. 15.

the distinguishing Privileges of true Christians) *every Brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the Instructions delivered by the Apostles of Christ.* But it would be a gross abuse of this Discipline, to enforce by It the Commandments of *fallible men*; and exercise it against those who refuse *willingly to walk after* || these Commandments; even when, to them, they appear contrary to the Commandments of the Lord. What a Noble and Lovely Society must it be, which is governed by the holy Laws of Christ? In which the sacred Institutions of the Son of GOD are kept pure and intire *? *Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God? Who would not pray for thy Peace! Who would not seek thy Good!*

WE, in these Lands, my Brethren, are *now* blessed with a Civil Constitution, and Form of Government, which is the Envy of other Nations around us; and, I'm sorry I must add, of a Set of infatuated Men among ourselves! A Form of Government, by which we are most effectually secured against the Extremes of Confusion, and Arbitrary Power; and of which we enjoy happy Fruits every Moment of our Lives: A Constitution, under which the Poor Man enjoys his Cottage, by the *same Tenure* as

the King does his Throne : A Constitution, built upon this Just and Noble Maxim ;
 “ That Subjects were not made for Princes,
 “ to be treated as their absolute Property,
 “ and descend from one to another like
 “ Cattle, let them be used as they will ; but
 “ Princes are made for their Subjects, to go-
 “ vern them legally and seek their Good.”

WE have a Prince upon the Throne, of as great Integrity, Bravery, and Clemency, as any that ever adorned one ! a true Nursing-Father to this Church ; whom, for his Mercy to the Fatherless and the Widows, *Generations to come shall call blessed* *. He is blessed with a numerous Royal Family ; affording us the most agreeable Prospect of a Succession of Princes, worthily and happily to sway the Scepter over these Lands ! a Family, trained up to all Virtue, and

* In framing the Scheme, lately passed into a Law, for providing the Widows and Orphans of Ministers, &c. in Scotland ; a Part of the Fund was proposed to arise from a Tax on vacant Stipends ; a great Part of which belong, by Law, to the Crown : It was therefore found necessary to supplicate his Majesty, to yield so much of His *Property*, for promoting this charitable Design ; which Request our most gracious Sovereign was pleased very readily to answer ; not by a bare granting of it ; but by recommending the Design, in a particular Manner, to both Houses of Parliament, as a pious and charitable Design ; when it was first brought in to these most Honourable Houses. *Vide* Votes of the House of Commons, January 24. 1743, and Journal of the House of Lords.

Strength

Strength of Mind, under his paternal Eye ; and by the pious Care of a Glorious Queen, who, in the Character of a Mother, was a noble Pattern to the whole Nation ! A Family, that has produced an illustrious young HERO, who is justly the Darling of the Nation ; and may well be the Darling of *this Part* of it, in particular ! a HERO *adorned*, in the earliest Youth, with the Wisdom and Conduct of Grey-hairs ; as well as the most intrepid Courage and Bravery ; and *all* these Virtues excelled by his Affability and Humanity, and the Goodness of his generous Heart ! One, whom we may justly look upon as a second *William* the DELIVERER of these Lands, from the threatned Danger of Popery and Slavery !

BUT ; it is the Blessing of our Constitution, since the Glorious REVOLUTION, that our Happiness does not depend on so precarious a Foundation as the personal Virtues of the reigning Prince may sometimes prove. His Power is bounded by wholesom Laws, enacted by our own Representatives : And should any future Prince (who came to the Throne on the Footing, on which the present Royal Family so gloriously fill it) be disposed to act without, or contrary, to these Laws ; he must easily be sensible, how dangerous it would be for himself to adventure upon it.

WHO, that has the Happiness to be a Member of *such* a Society, would not be con-

cerned for its *peace*? Who would not *seek* the *Prosperity* of *such* a Constitution? Withal,

WE have the pure, the merciful and peaceable, Religion of the blessed JESUS securely professed among us : and have free Access to receive *the Words of eternal Life* from the Mouth of the SON of GOD himself ; and the Records of his holy Apostles. We have a Church settled among us, upon the Footing and Principles on which Christianity was at first planted in the World ; and on which the glorious Reformation, from Popish Idolatry and Superstition, Tyranny and Cruelty, was brought about. We, who are its *Ministers*, claim no Dominion over your Faith or Consciences : we reckon, that the *Ministerial Authority*, which *alone* we pretend to, is limited, by our common LORD himself, to the *teaching* of you *to observe all, and only, these things which he hath commanded* *. The primitive apostolical Plan of the Christian Church is the Model, after which we have studied to form our Constitution and Government. At the same Time ; we abhor the mad Scheme of those, who would make any particular Form of External Government so absolutely necessary to the Being of a Christian Church ; that

* These are, certainly, the *declared* Principles of the Church of *Scotland* : May all her Sons constantly and uniformly maintain the Profession of them ; and may their Practice be always answerable to such a Profession !

they

they who cannot see, or submit to, its Authority, are doomed by the *Father of Mercies* to everlasting Torments; be their Faith in Christ ever so sincere, and their Submission and Obedience to him ever so cordial and conscientious! A Scheme, not to be mentioned without Horror. The Foundation of our Church-Constitution is laid in these glorious Articles; “That, Christ is the only King and Head of his Church:” That, “God * alone is Lord of the Conscience;” “and hath left it *free from* the Doctrines “and Commandments of Men, that are in “any Thing *contrary* to his Word, or *beside* it, in Matters of Faith or Worship:” A Privilege, which would signify nothing; if Men were not *left free* to examine and judge for themselves, *what Doctrines* and Commandments of Men *are contrary* to God’s Word, or *beside* it in Matters of Faith or Worship. We may mistake, as all fallible Men may; and we never pretended to be infallible: but if, upon such serious Examination as you can answer for to our common Lord, you cannot find any of our Sentences or Decisions really enforced by *thus saith the Lord*, you are to treat them with the Neglect, or Contempt, they deserve; and (for your own Sakes) with no more, neither: but, if they are *really* so enforced;

* Conf. of Faith. C. 20. Sect. 2.

(not by a rash, or profane, use of that Sacred Name; but, by *Manifestation of the Truth to your Consciences*;) you must know, that it is at your highest Peril, if you dare to despise them. But,

SURE, *such* a Church may very fairly claim your best Wishes, and most hearty Concern for its Peace and Welfare. And this leads me to enquire,

II. WHAT *Blessings* we are here taught to be concerned for, in behalf of our Country, and the Church of God, *Peace*; and *Prosperity*, or *Good* *.

Peace, in the Language of the ancient *Jews*, is frequently used as a general Name, for all Manner of Blessings: but, when distinguished from other Branches of Happiness, it signifies Quietness, and Freedom from Disturbance, either from without, or from within. Thus, the *Peace* of the Country signifies, Freedom from Attacks of Enemies without; and from inward Com-motions and Insurrections; together with that Disaffection to the Constitution, those Jealousies and Animosities, Hatreds and Variances, which are the Causes of them.

OUR gracious GOD has, for a long Time, blessed us, in these Lands, with both these Kinds of *Peace*. But, our ungrateful Abuse of this Blessing has, at last, provoked Him

* Ver. 7, 8, 9.

to permit our Peace to be sadly disturbed, both these Ways. After we had been long engaged in a just and necessary War, with the open Enemies of our Country; and common Disturbers of the Tranquillity of Europe: they have, at last, had the Art to stir up Foes in our own Bosom; whose restless Spite against our happy Settlement has made them tamely give up themselves to do *their* Work; and thus, at once act the Part of ravening Wolves to their Country, and silly Dupes to its declared Enemies; even with the manifest Danger of bringing Ruin on their own Heads. The sad Fruits of this Rebellion, have been exceeding great and calamitous; have widely spread; and are likely to last long. The more earnestly concerned must all true Lovers of their Country be, to have our Peace compleatly restored, preserved and established upon lasting Foundations; and all the Causes of our Disquiet and Disturbance cured, or rooted out. That *peace may ever be within our walls* *: *that there be no tumultuous breaking in, nor going out; no complaining in our streets* †: *That violence be no more heard in our land: wasting nor destruction within our borders.*

AND, not only are we to be concerned for the *Peace* of our Country; but its *Good*. That general Industry, Honesty and Inte-

* Psal. cxliv, 14.

† Isa. lx, 18.

grity make take Place ; without which no Community can long flourish. That Agriculture and Manufactures may thrive : the Poor may be employed in honest Labour ; and, in that Way, *be satisfied with Bread*. That Trade may prosper, may be always exercised in such a Way as is for the Good of the Country ; and managed fairly and honestly, without defrauding either the Publick *, or particular Persons, of their *Due* : and particularly, may not be loaded with horrid Perjury, which must bring a Curse upon it ; and however perverse Custom may make it be slightly thought of by Men, that awful Sentence must eternally and immutably stand ; *the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his Name in vain*.

AND, in order to our enjoying those Blessings, we must be, particularly, concerned for the Preservation of our valuable Liberties ; and that excellent Constitution, and Form of Government, to which we owe their Security : that the late wicked Attempt to subvert It, may be improved into a Mean of strengthening it, and an Occasion of our holding it fast. That our gracious Sovereign King *George*, and his Royal Family, may be preserved : and the Crown may long flourish upon his Head ; and, on the Heads of his Posterity after him, to latest Generations. That all inferior Ma-

* Rom, xiii. 7.

gistracies, and all Places of Power and Trust, may be filled with Men heartily well affected to our happy Establishment. That *Prosperity* and *Plenty* may be *within our Palaces*: not for the vain Amusement of the Great; but for a Blessing to the Multitude, affording the Means of Subsistence to Numbers; and, as a Security to that Power, for the publick Good, which naturally follows Property. In fine, that general Love and Friendship, and all social Virtues, may take Place; *that righteousness* flourish, which *exalts a nation*; and a due Regard to GOD and Religion always prevail. And thus our Concern is led on,

To the *Peace* and *Prosperity* of the Church of GOD; especially, that Part of it which is planted among ourselves. This is a special Object of the Concern of every good Man. That the Light of the Gospel may widely spread: The Minds of all Men may be so disposed to receive it, and it may enter them with such Force of Evidence, as to overcome all Opposition; stop the Mouths of Gainfayers; and captivate the Hearts of all Men to *its* Obedience: That, for this End, all fair and candid Examination be freely allowed and encouraged; a Thing, which never disturbed the Peace of the glorious Head of the Church, and should never disturb Her's: That there be no Persecution of any, on a Religious Account; no In-
vasion

vation of the Rights of Conscience : but, all peaceable Subjects to the Civil Government be permitted by *it* to worship GOD according to their Consciences. That there be no * *Schism in the Body of Christ* ; no uncharitable Divisions, Suspicions, or Jealousies among *its* Members ; but All † *endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, forbearing one another in love*. For, “ the *Peace* of the *Church of Christ* is a
 “ Manly and Reasonable Peace ; built up-
 “ on Charity, Love, and mutual For-
 “ bearingance. As for any other Peace, found-
 “ ed upon a Submission of our *Honesty*, as
 “ well as our *Understandings*, to weak and
 “ fallible Men, it is not the *Peace* of the
 “ *Church of Christ*, but the *Lethargy* of it.”
 The *true Peace* of all the Members of the Church, must arise from an inviolable and close Attachment to *its* glorious Head ; by Faith, Love, and Obedience : This leads not barely to an Outward Peace in the Church ; but that Inward Peace, amidst all Disturbances of the World, which is Christ’s *Legacy* to his Disciples, *John* xiv. 27. *Peace I leave with you, &c.*

AND, not only are we to be concerned for the *Peace* of the Church ; but Its *Welfare* and *Prosperity*. That Its *Ministers* may be *cloathed with Righteousness* ; and Its *Saints shout for Joy*. That the Seats of

* 1 Cor. xii. 25. † Eph. iv. 2, 3.

Learning may flourish : and may send many forth, well qualified to be Ornaments to their Country, and to the Church of God ; to set Truth in the fairest Light, and convince Gain-sayers. That all the Ordinances of Christ may ever be purely dispensed, submissively received and observed : And, under the Dispensation of them, all the Members of the Church, in their several Stations, may improve themselves, and be assisting to one another, in every Thing good and valuable. That Sinners may be converted to God and Goodness ; Saints may flourish in the inward Graces of the Holy Spirit, and the Consolations that flow from them. Particularly ; now that it hath pleased God, of his great Goodness and Mercy, to restore to us Rest and Peace ; let it be our Concern, that we may be in the happy Condition of the Primitive Churches, upon the ceasing of the Persecution of *Saul* : of which we read, *Acts ix. 31.* *Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the holy Spirit, were multiplied.* These are the Blessings, to our Country, and the Church, for which we are to be earnestly concerned. Now,

III. *WHAT Ways* are we here taught to *exercise* and express this Concern ?

I. By

1. BY earnest *Prayers*. *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem*. This Duty (when performed in good Earnest; and under a just Awe of the Searcher of Hearts, whom we profess to address) is a special Exercise and Testimony of the *Sincerity* of our Love and Concern. This Way, even they who have *most Power*, may *procure* more Good than, by all their other Endeavours, they can possibly *do*; by imploring the Help of him who is All-sufficient, the Author of all Blessings and Happiness: at the same Time, they who *can* do, or think they can do, little more; may *pray for the peace of Jerusalem*; and, this Way, at least, *seek her Good*. Withal, earnest Prayer is an excellent Natural mean of exercising and improving those good Affections, which belong to a truly Publick Spirit; and, was a Spirit of Supplication *general*, it would greatly promote that general Piety and Virtue; which most directly conduce to the Publick Welfare. Therefore, are we so frequently exhorted to this Duty in Holy Scripture; particularly, by the Apostle, 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. *I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.*

THE Subject and Matter of such Addresses and Petitions may be gathered from
what

what has been spoken under the former Head: it is often repeated in our publick Prayers: Let us see to it, that Custom do not turn the Repetition into a lifeless Form. In all our Addresses to GOD, let us seriously consider, to *whom* we take upon us to speak. Let our Prayers for our Country, and the Church of GOD, be frequent and constant: 1 *Thes.* v. 17. *Pray without ceasing.* Let them be fervent and importunate: *Isa.* lxii. 67. *Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.* Let them all be offered up in the Name of the * *one Mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus*; not contenting ourselves with a *formal* mentioning of his Name; but exercising a lively Faith on his Mediation, as our great *High Priest* and *Advocate with the Father* †. In fine, let us see to it, that they be the *Prayers* of reformed and *righteous Men*; which *avail much* ‡; while *the prayer of the wicked is abomination* ||.

AND, if we are thus *in earnest*, in praying for the *peace of Jerusalem*; we shall not reckon that, by our Prayers, we have *so* devolved the Matter upon GOD, as to supersede all other Endeavours of our own for that Purpose; but shall join with our Prayers,

* 1 *Tim.* ii. 5. † 1 *John* ii. 1. ‡ *James* v. 16.
|| *Prov.* xv. 8. xxviii. 9.

2. Suitable *Endeavours* for the publick Welfare, and the Prosperity of the Church. *I will seek thy good* *. And here,

(1.) Let all our Endeavours, for such worthy and important Purposes, be *lawful* and *honest*. Good and honest Ends are, to be prosecuted only by good and honest Means. Let all our Endeavours for the publick Good be managed in a Way of Loyalty to our most Gracious Sovereign, and our happy Constitution. We have a Prince now upon the Throne (blessed be God) whose amiable Virtues command our hearty Affection and Regard: but, was the personal Character of the reigning Prince the very *Reverse* of the Present; so long as he rules according to Law †, *he is the minister of God to us for good: Wherefore, we must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.* Let us carefully cultivate the true Principles of Liberty, Civil and Religious; and teach them to our Children: there may be great Hopes of doing Good with the rising Generation; by seasoning their Minds with good Principles, before they are tainted with bad Ones. Again: let all our Endeavours for the Good of our Country be managed with a *due* Regard to the Laws; to which we owe our Protection, and the Security of our Proper-

* Ver. 9. † Rom. xiii. 4, 5.

ties ; to which our Church owes its Civil Establishment, and its legal Emoluments and Provisions : at the same time, let us not strain, or stretch any Law we call a *hard* one ; so as to make it really *harder* than the Legislature has made it : on the contrary, wherever human Laws seem to interfere with the Laws of God (a case which may sometimes happen, even under the best Government upon Earth) we must, at all adventures, obey God rather than Men. In fine, in all our Attempts for the Good of the Church, let us act with an inviolable Regard to the sacred Rules of Truth and Integrity : Certainly, Lies and Calumnies can never come in more awkwardly, and out of Place ; than in pretended *Testimonies for the Truth* ; or when we profess to act in the Sacred Name of the *Lord Jesus*.

(2.) Let our Endeavours, for the publick Good, be *constant and assiduous*. That “ we should make our whole Life one continued Train of good Actions ; and be constantly passing from one Action to another, that has some Tendency to promote the general Good :” was the noble Advice of a great Heathen Prince * ; which may put many Christians to the Blush, and should stir up all our Emulation.

* M. Antoninus, *passim*.

(3.) Let our Endeavours for the Good of our Country, and of the Church, be such as are *proper* for each of us, in our several Stations.

WE, who are *Ministers*, may, by the Blessing of GOD, do a great deal this Way: by our Doctrine, and Example. If we make it the great Scope of our Labours, not only to inform Mens Judgments, but chiefly to gain and form their Hearts; to the Love of the Truth; the Love of GOD and Goodness; and a prevailing Relish for Divine Things; to the Love of their Country; and to every Social Virtue: * *in all things shewing ourselves patterns of good works*. Let it never be said of us, my Reverend Fathers and Brethren, as has been too justly said of some, who have arrogated to themselves the Name of *Clergy*, in other Parts of the World; “ that we have, and drive, a *separate Interest*; opposite to that of civil Society, “ and the Community of Mankind:” No: as, by the Grace of GOD we have been enabled to distinguish ourselves, by acting a worthy Part for our Country, and our King, in these Times of Trial; let us go on, to act an uniform good Part, in the whole of our Ministry and Conversation: that we, and the People under the Influence of *our* Instructions and Example, may go on to

* Titus ii. 7.

show the World, as we have done ; that the Imputation of Disloyalty upon the Presbyterians of *Scotland* (so far as it has any Truth in it) means no more than this : “ That
 “ we have an invincible Disdain to be
 “ *Slaves* ; and, especially, to enslave our
 “ Consciences to *any Mortal* : But we will
 “ be the best, and most zealous, of *Subjects*
 “ to a King ruling (as the Present does) according to Law ; and with a tender Regard to the sacred Rights of Conscience.”

Again,

WOULD the *People*, of all Ranks, * *follow after the Things that make for Peace, and whereby they may edify, and profit, one another* ; each in his Station, would do something for the Publick Welfare.

WOULD the Great Ones imitate the Example of the Noble *Mordecai* : who, while he lay concealed under the Appearance of the meanest Character, made a *timely Discovery* † of a traiterous Conspiracy against the Life of the King ; and, even then, ‡ disdained to truckle to an Idol of State, or meanly make *his Obedience* to one who was unworthy of it ; || was most deeply affected with the Calamities, and the Danger of his Countrymen ; * and improved his Access to a Court, to sound plain undisguised Truth, and honest seasonable Advice, into a Royal

* Rom. xiv. 19. † Esther ii. 21. ‡ ---iii. 2. &c.
 || ---iv. 1. &c. * ---viii. 13, 14.

Ear : And, when raised to that Greatness and Power he well deserved, was † *accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.*

WOULD those of inferior Stations be *subject to Principalities and Powers, obey Magistrates, and be ready to every good Work* *.

IN short, there is not the meanest Servant-man, or Maid, but may do something for the publick Good ; and even *adorn the Doctrine of GOD our Saviour in all Things* † ; by performing *faithfully, and with Goodwill* ‖, the Duties of their several Stations ; and thus, *serving the Lord Christ* ‡.

To excite to this Publick Virtue, the Psalmist,

IV. SUGGESTS several encouraging Motives. As,

I. THAT our own Welfare and Prosperity arises from this Disposition. *They shall prosper that love thee.* As, when Calamities become universal, all are, at least, in Danger of being involved in them ; so, the Effects of Publick Prosperity usually circulate and spread, till All come to feel them : And the Lover of his Country has, ordinarily, a special Share of them.

† Esther x. 3. * Tit. iii. 1. ‡ Tit. ii. 10. ‖ Eph. vi. 7. † Col. iii. 24.

BUT,

BUT, sharing in the outward Blessings of *Peace* and *Plenty* is a thing small and inconsiderable, to the inward *Prosperity* they enjoy, in whose Breasts such Noble and generous Affections have the Prevalency : Affections, the Exercise of which gives an *immediate* Joy ; to which the selfish Heart is a Stranger ! a Joy, exceedingly increased, by the Approbation of the conscious Mind ; and by a Sense of the general Esteem Publick Virtue procures ; the deserved Love of those of the same worthy Character ; and, especially, the never-failing Approbation of the Great Parent of Human Society, whom the good Man so gloriously imitates ! What a Joy must it give to the generous Heart, to see the Publick flourish ? to behold Happiness spread around him ! especially, when this is accompanied with the Reflection on his having contributed his little Share to this Prosperity ! *Little* perhaps ; yet *all* the Share he could : How delightful to the Pious Soul to *see the Good of GOD's Chosen* ; to *rejoice in the Gladness of his Nation* ; and *triumph with his Inheritance* ! * And, not only are such generous Affections delightful, when successful : But even when they carry a Man through a Series of anxious and fruitless Cares, and painful Sympathy ; still the Consciousness of the Goodness of his Heart, and

* Psal. cvi. 5.

the Integrity of his Intentions, gives him great Comfort and Joy. The good Man's sharing in the Calamities of his Country, cannot hinder, or mar, this inward Prosperity : and, even when the View of publick Distress gives him the greatest Pain, the Consciousness of this generous Affection must give him a satisfying Self-approbation. And, as the Cause of Truth and Righteousness, and of the Church of God, shall, certainly, be the prevailing and triumphant Cause at last ; to all the true Friends and Lovers of that Cause it shall, *one Day*, be said ; * *Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her : rejoice with joy for her, all ye that mourned for her.* In fine ; by the Exercise of these generous Affections, in any way, the Soul prospers and improves in those Virtues, by which it is fitted for perfect Happiness, and *Fulness of Joy*, in the most exalted Society. Thus, *O Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee !* while † *the haters of Zion*, open or disguised, shall be confounded and turned back : they shall be as *grass upon the house-tops, which withereth afore it groweth up.*

2. THE Happiness of those in whom we are most nearly concerned is involved in the publick Prosperity. *For my brethren and companions-sakes, I will now say, Peace be*

* Isa. lxvi. 10. † Psal. cxxix. 5, 6.

within thee. If, therefore, we have any just Concern for our own Families, our nearest Friends, or most intimate Acquaintances ; let this lead us to a Concern for the Publick Welfare, and the Prosperity of the Church : for without the general Prosperity ; private Advantages will fade, or be of little Account. Particularly ; if we have any Concern for Posterity ; any tender Affection for our dear Children ; if we would desire that *they* should be happy, and bless our Memories when we are gone ; let it be our Care to have the Blessings we enjoy ; those valuable Liberties and Privileges, Civil and Religious, which our brave and worthy Ancestors have handed down to us, at the Expence of so much Blood and Treasure ; faithfully transmitted to our Posterity. “ That the Love of our “ Country contains within it the Love of “ every other Relation,” is an Argument much insisted on, by the great *Roman* Orator and Philosopher*. But, the Psalmist concludes, with a higher Reason for his Love of *Jerusalem*, and our Love of our Country, than could enter into the Heart of an *old Roman* : *Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good.* Let us, therefore, consider,

* *Cari sunt parentes ; cari liberi, propinqui, familiares : sed omnes omnium caritates patria una complexa est. Cic. Off. I. 17.*

3. WHAT do we owe to the Church of Christ; which He hath redeemed by His most precious Blood? to that Church, by whose pious Care we have been trained up in the Knowledge of the most important Things, and in the most excellent Virtues? Great as the Motive is, to be zealous for the *Peace* and *Prosperity* of our Country; because it secures all the Blessings of a temporal Happiness, to ourselves, and the dearest Objects of our Affection: yet, to a well-disposed Mind, this is of small Account, in Comparison with the Opportunities of cultivating the Temper by a pure Religion; and having ourselves, and our Friends, trained up, by its Means, in such Dispositions of Heart, such Habits of Piety and Virtue, as will make us happy, not only in this World, but through Eternity.

F I N I S.

June 18th 1871. The weather was very
warm and the sun shone brightly. I
went to the office and found the
books in the best of order. The
accounts were all correct and the
balance sheet was in the hands of
the auditor. The day was very
pleasant and the work was done
in a very satisfactory manner.

1871 to 1872. The year was very
successful.

THIS Author writes with candour, and in a very sensible manner ; there are no marks, in his Letters, of that intemperate heat, and violent party-spirit, with which the writers in this controversy, more perhaps than in any other, have generally disgraced, both themselves, and their subjects.

Monthly Review for Oct. 1758. p. 414.

A
PLAIN ACCOUNT
OF THE
ORDINANCE of BAPTISM;
IN WHICH

All the TEXTS of the NEW TESTAMENT,
relating to it, are produced, and the
whole DOCTRINE concerning it drawn
from them alone :

IN
A COURSE of LETTERS
To the Right Reverend
Dr. BENJAMIN HOADLY,
Late Lord Bishop of *Winchester*,
Author of a PLAIN ACCOUNT of the
LORD'S SUPPER.

*Ye shall not add unto the word which I have com-
manded you, neither shall you diminish from
it.*

THE SECOND EDITION, CORRECTED,
With ADDITIONS.

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LETTER I.

MY LORD,

WHEN I read your Lordship's *Plain Account of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, many years ago, I could not help wishing to see an account of the *other* Sacrament drawn up in the same manner. You have certainly laid the true foundation of our enquiries into the *positive institutions* of Christianity. You draw your account of a *Christian* rite from the *Christian* records; and your assertion is undoubtedly true: "that all *positive duties*, or duties
" made such by institution alone, depend
" entirely upon the will and declaration of
" the person who institutes or ordains
" them, with respect to the real *design*
" and *end* of them; and, consequently, to
" the due *manner* of performing them."

Since no one has yet executed what has been so long wished for, I shall make an

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humble attempt to follow your Lordship's example with respect to the sacrament of *baptism*. I shall lay together all the texts in the *New Testament* relating to it, and from them alone draw the whole doctrine about it. And I reckon it is with great propriety that I address my enquiries on this subject to your Lordship, because if I find the truth, I am indebted to *you* for pointing out the shortest and plainest way to it.

I beg leave to begin with some of your propositions, making the necessary alteration from the one sacrament to the other.

I. The receiving of *baptism* is not a duty of itself; or a duty apparent to us from the nature of things; but a duty made such to *Christians*, by the positive institution of *Jesus Christ*.

II. All *positive duties*, or duties made such by *institution* alone, depend entirely upon the will and declaration of the person who institutes or ordains them, with re-

spect to the real *design* and *end* of them ; and, consequently, to the due *manner* of performing them.

III. It is plain, therefore, that the *nature*, the *design*, and the due *manner* of receiving *baptism*, must of necessity depend upon what *Jesus Christ*, who instituted it, hath declared about it.

IV. It cannot be doubted that he himself sufficiently declared to his first and immediate followers, the whole of what he designed should be understood by it, or implied in it.

V. It is of small importance, therefore, to *Christians*, to know what the many writers upon this subject, since the time of the Evangelists and Apostles, have affirmed ; much less can it be the duty of *Christians* to be guided by what any persons, by their own authority, or from their own imaginations, may teach concerning this duty.

VI. The passages in the *New Testament*, which relate to this duty, and they alone, are the original accounts of the *nature* and *end* of this institution, and the only authentic declarations, upon which we of later ages can safely depend, being written by the immediate followers of our Lord ; those who were witnesses themselves of the *institution*, or were instructed by those who were so, and join with them in delivering down one and the same account of this religious duty.

Your Lordship will permit me to mention an observation of yours, most worthy to be remembered, under this last proposition, *viz.* “ A *very few* years make a
 “ great alteration in mens notions, and
 “ language about such points of religion.
 “ And the distance of *many* years makes
 “ a still greater alteration ; whilst men of
 “ various opinions, and strong imagina-
 “ tions, are continually going on to com-
 “ ment and enlarge upon such subjects,
 “ the *New Testament* therefore, in this

“ case, is *alone* to be depended on : from
 “ which we ought, with the greatest care
 “ and honesty, to take *all* our notions of
 “ this duty.”

Your Lordship will be pleased with the following observation of Archbishop *Tillotson*, much to the same purpose. “ In
 “ process of time, the best institutions are
 “ apt to *decline*, and by insensible degrees
 “ to swerve, and depart from the perfec-
 “ tion of their first state ; and therefore it
 “ is a good rule, to preserve things from
 “ corruption and degeneracy, often to look
 “ back to *the first institution*, and by that
 “ to correct those imperfections and errors
 “ which will almost unavoidably creep in
 “ with time.” Vol. 2. page 170, edit. fol.

I shall now offer to your Lordship’s perusal every text of the *New Testament*, that speaks of the sacrament of *Baptism*. It will be proper first to set down those which belong to *John’s* baptism.

Passages of Scripture concerning JOHN's baptism.

1. *Mat. iii. 5, 6, 7.* Then went out to him *Jerusalem* and all *Judea*, and all the region round about *Jordan*, and were *baptized* of him in *Jordan*, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadduces come to his *baptism*, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, &c.

2. *Verse 11.* I indeed *baptize* you with water unto repentance, &c.

3. *Verse 13, 14, 15, 16.* Then cometh *Jesus* from *Galilee* to *Jordan* unto *John*, to be *baptized* of him. But *John* forbad him saying, I have need to be *baptized* of thee, and comest thou to me? And *Jesus* answering said unto him, suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And *Jesus* when he was *baptized* went up straightway out of the water.

4. *Mat. xxi. 25, 26, 27.* The *baptism* of *John*, whence was it? From heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, if we shall say from heaven, he will say unto us, why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say of men, we fear the people, for all hold *John* as a prophet. And they answered *Jesus*, and said, We cannot tell, &c.

5. *Mark i. 4, 5.* *John* did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of *Judea*, and they of *Jerusalem*, and were all baptized of him in the river of *Jordan* confessing their sins.

6.—Ver. 8, 9, 10. I indeed have baptized you with water.—And it came to pass in those days, that *Jesus* came from *Nazareth* of *Galilee*, and was baptized of *John* in *Jordan*, and straightway coming up out of the water, &c.

7. *Mark xi. 30.* The *baptism* of *John*, was it from heaven, or of men?

8. *Luke iii. 3.* And he came into all the country about *Jordan*, preaching the *baptism* of repentance for the remission of sins.

9.—Ver. 7, 8. Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be *baptized* of him, O generation of vipers ——— bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance,

10.—Ver. 12. Then came also Publicans to be *baptized*.

11.—Ver. 16. I indeed *baptize* you with water.

12.—Ver. 21. Now when all the people were *baptized*, it came to pass that *Jesus* also being *baptized*, &c.

13. *Luke vii. 29, 30.* And all the people that heard him, and the Publicans

justified God, being *baptized* with the *baptism* of *John*. But the Pharisees and Lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not *baptized* of him.

14. *Luke* xx. 4. The *baptism* of *John*, was it from heaven or of men?

15. *John* i. 25, 26. Why *baptizest* thou then, if thou be not that *Christ*, nor *Elias*, neither that prophet? *John* answered them saying, I *baptize* with water.

16.—Ver. 28. Beyond *Jordan* where *John* was *baptizing*.

17.—Ver. 31. That he should be made manifest to *Israel*: therefore am I come *baptizing* with water.

18.—Ver. 33. He that sent me to *baptize* with water.

19. *John* iii. 23. And *John* also was *baptizing* in *Enon*, near to *Salim*, because

there was much water there; and they came and were *baptized*. Note, some understand

[Verse 25. of *baptism*, then there arose a question—about *purifying*.]

20. *John* iv. 1. The pharisees had heard that *Jesus* made and *baptized* more disciples than *John*.

21. *John* x. 40. Beyond *Jordan*, into the place where *John* at first *baptized*.

22. *Acts* i. 5. *John* truly *baptized* with water.

23.—Ver. 22. Beginning from the *baptism* of *John*.

24. *Acts* x. 37. After the *baptism* which *John* preached.

25.—xi. 16. *John* indeed *baptized* with water.

26.—xiii. 24. When *John* had first preached before his coming the *baptism* of repentance to all the people.

27.—xviii. 25. He [*Apollos*] spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the *baptism* of *John*.

28.—xix. 3, 4. Unto what then were ye *baptized*? And they said unto *John's baptism*. Then said *Paul*, *John* verily *baptized* with the *baptism* of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on *Christ Jesus*.

Passages of scripture concerning CHRIST'S Baptism.

1. *Mat.* xxviii. 19. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, *baptizing* them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

2. *Mark* xvi. 15, 16. And he said unto

unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is *baptized* shall be saved,

3. *John* iii. 5. Except a man be *born of water* and of the spirit, &c.

4.—*Ver.* 22. After these things came *Jesus* and his disciples into the land of *Judea*; and there he tarried with them and *baptized*.

5.—*Ver.* 26. Behold the same *baptizeth*, and all men come to him.

6.—iv. 1. 2. When therefore the Lord knew how the pharisees had heard, that *Jesus* made and *baptized* more disciples than *John* (though *Jesus* himself *baptized* not, but his disciples.)

7. *Acts* ii. 38. Then *Peter* said unto them, Repent, and be *baptized* every one of you in the name of *Jesus Christ*, for the

remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

8. *Acts* ii. 41. Then they that gladly received his word, were *baptized*.

9.—viii. 12, 13. But when they believed *Philip*, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of *Jesus Christ*, they were *baptized*, both men and women. Then *Simon* himself believed also; and when he was *baptized*, &c.

10.—Ver. 16. Only they were *baptized* in the name of the Lord *Jesus*.

11.—Ver. 36, 37, 38, 39. And as they went on their way they came unto a certain water. And the Eunuch said, See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be *baptized*? And *Philip* said, if thou believest with all thine heart thou may'st. And he answered and said, I believe that *Jesus Christ* is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still. And they went down both into the water, both

Philip and the Eunuch, and he *baptized* him. And when they were come up out of the water, &c.

12.—ix. 18. And [*Saul*] arose and was *baptized*.

13.—x. 47, 48. Can any man forbid water, that these should not be *baptized*, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be *baptized* in the name of the Lord.

14. *Acts* xvi. 15. And when she [*Lydia*] was *baptized* and her household.

15.—Ver. 33. And was *baptized*, he [the jaylor] and all his straightway.

16.—xviii. 8. And many of the *Corinthians* hearing, believed, and were *baptized*.

17.—xix. 5. When they heard this, they [who had before been baptized into

John's baptism] were *baptized* in the name of the Lord *Jesus*.

18.—xxii. 16. And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be *baptized*, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

19. *Romans* vi. 3, 4. Know ye not, that so many of us as were *baptized* into *Christ Jesus*, were *baptized* into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by *baptism* into death, that like as *Christ* was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in the newness of life.

20. *1 Corinthians* i. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17. Were ye *baptized* in the name of *Paul*? I thank God that I *baptized* none of you, but *Crispus* and *Gaius* : lest any should say, that I had *baptized* in mine own name. And I *baptized* also the household of *Stephanas* : besides, I know not whether I *bap-*

tized any other; for *Christ* sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.

21. 1 *Cor.* vi. 11. But ye are *washed*.

22. *Ibid.* xii. 13. For by one spirit are we all *baptized* into one body. [Note, this may rather be understood of the baptism of the *Holy Ghost*.]

23. 1 *Cor.* xv. 29. Else what shall they do, that are *baptized* for the dead. [That is, I think, by baptism come *into the place* of those Christians who are dead, who are their *successors* in their profession, and in their sufferings.]

24. *Gal.* iii. 27. For as many of you as have been *baptized* into *Christ*, have put on *Christ*.

25. *Ephes.* iv. 5. One *baptism*.

26. *Ibid.* v. 26. That he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the *washing of water*, by the word.

27. *Coloff.* ii. 12. Buried with him in *baptism*, wherein also you are risen with him.

28. *Tit.* iii. 5. According to his mercy he saved us, by the *washing* of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

29. *Hebrews* vi. 2. The doctrine of *baptisms*. [Note, it is not certain, this has any reference to Christian baptism. See *Peirce in loc.*]

30.—x. 22. Our bodies *washed* with pure water.

31. I *Peter* iii. 21. The like figure where-unto, even *baptism*, doth also now save us (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God) by the resurrection, &c.

Besides the foregoing, there are these following texts, which some good expositors understand of *baptism*.

2 *Peter* i. 9. And hath forgotten, that he was *purged* from his old sins. *Hebrews* vi. 4. Those who were once *enlightened*. *Heb.* x. 32. In which after ye were *illuminated*.

These are, I believe, all the texts in the *New Testament*, that relate either to the *baptism* of *John*, or of *Christ*.

The observations I have to offer from them, shall be reserved to some following letters.

I am, my Lord,

*Your Lordship's most obedient
humble Servant.*

LETTER

LETTER II.

My Lord,

THERE are some opinions in Theology so entirely *speculative*, that a man, who has a just value for time, would scarce think himself justified in spending a day to examine which are right, and which wrong. The subject before us is *not* of this sort : it is entirely of a *practical* nature, and comes into practice daily. It therefore becomes us to look well to our *rule*, to what our *Saviour* and his *immediate followers* have declared about this duty ; “ because (as your
“ Lordship well observes) we can have *no*
“ other direction in this sort of duties, un-
“ less we will have recourse to *mere inven-*
“ *tion*, which makes them *our own* institu-
“ tions, and not the institutions of *those*
“ who first appointed them.” *Plain Ac.*
p. 3.

In the foregoing letter, it appears, there are about *threescore* texts of scripture, which

speak of the institution of *baptism*; partly as practised by *John*, and partly by the Apostles and Disciples of *Jesus Christ*: Passages abundantly sufficient to inform us of the *nature, design, and manner* of this sacrament.

I beg leave first to lay before your Lordship an enquiry into the *manner* of this rite, or what the *New Testament* means by the action of *baptizing*.

The writers of the *New Testament* make use of two words, βαπτίζω and λω which lead us to the precise meaning of baptism, the latter of which is almost the constant word of the Septuagint in those *very numerous* places where *bathing*, or washing the *whole body* is commanded, in contradistinction to every other practice of washing the hands or feet, or sprinkling or washing of cloaths. Λεσεται υδατι occurs no less than eleven times in one chapter, where bathing the body is appointed

on fundry occasions, as a *distinct rite* from washing the hands, or garments, &c.

The Evangelists and Apostles did, as Dr. *Prideaux*, the most learned *Joseph Mede*, and others observe, * all quote from the *Greek* of the *Old Testament*. *Prid. Connect.* vol. II. page 47, edit. 3. *Mede's Works*, p. 625. Since therefore λασεται υδατι, used times without number in the *Old Testament*, never imports less than *bathing*, or washing the *whole body*; it follows, *baptism* means the same, when it is expressed by *our body washed with pure*

* “ We must explain the phraseology of the Apostles
 “ by that of *Moses*, and the prophets. The *Greek* of
 “ the *Septuagint* version, which was commonly read by
 “ those *Jerws* who lived in foreign countries, and spoke
 “ the *Greek* language, will serve to shew us, what words
 “ in the *Hebrew* correspond to the *Greek* words, which
 “ the Apostles used. For the Apostles used the *Helleni-*
 “ *sic Greek*, into which the *Old Testament* is translated,
 “ and which the *Jerws* in their dispersions commonly
 “ read.” *Taylor's Key to the Apostolic Writings*, p.
 115. edit. 2.

water. [Gr. λαμβανει το σωμα υδατι καθαρω.]
Heb. x. 22.

We have a remarkable passage in the case of *Naaman* the Syrian's cure of a leprosy. *Elisha* commands him to go and wash [λῆσαι] in *Jordan* seven times; the very practice appointed for cleansing a leper, and which, without controversy, means *washing the whole body*, in distinction from all other rites of *sprinkling, pouring, &c.* What is done by the leper in consequence of this command? He went down and *dipped* himself [ἐβαπτισατο] seven times in *Jordan*, according to the saying of the man of *God*. *2 Kings v. 14.* What was the saying of the man of *God*? *Wash* [bathe] *seven times.* He did as he was commanded, viz. he *dipped* himself seven times; the strict translation of the *Hebrew* word [טָבַל;] and so rendered in every place, without one exception, where the word occurs in the *Old Testament.* From which word the *Jews* call *John* the Baptist טַבָּל the dipper. *Gret. in Mat. xiv. 2.*

It falls out, my Lord, very remarkably, that the *only two* words which the *Greek* of the *Old Testament* makes use of to express the rite of washing the *whole body*, as distinct from *all other rites* of sprinkling, pouring, washing the hands and feet; both these words, and *only these*, are made use of in the *Greek* of the *New Testament*, to *specify* and determine, with *precision*, the action of *baptizing*. So that if the Evangelists and Apostles had, on purpose, sought words which should *precisely* express a *bathing the whole body*, and *prevent* all inquiry whether they meant nothing *short* of it; they *could not possibly* have met with two fitter words than λῴω* and βαπτίζω. Βαπτω would hardly have done so well, because, borrowing their *Greek* from the *Old Testament*, this last word is never used there to express the rite of washing or dipping a person's whole body. Let any learned person try to find out two *better* words, if he

* The *New Testament* has also its compound ἀπὸ λῴω, *Acts* xxii. 16, 1. *Cor.* vi. 11.

had a mind to express *a washing of the whole body*. The question is not, whether *sprinkling* was a ceremony of purification. No one doubts it: but whether sprinkling is the rite of *baptism*? Whoever is acquainted with the *Greek* of the *Old Testament*, whence, as has been observed, the Evangelists and Apostles took their language, may perceive that *sprinkling* and *baptism* are as *distinct* rites, as are the actions of *baptism*, and the priest's putting *oil* upon the tip of the right ear, and the thumb of the right hand, and upon the great toe of the right foot. Both which ceremonies of *baptism*, and such application of *oil*, were used in cleansing a leper. *Lev. xiv.*

And here your Lordship will permit me to observe, we run into a *great mistake* and *confusion* of language, when we talk of *sprinkling* and *immersion* as different *modes* of the *same thing*. *Modern custom* has reconciled us to this abuse of language; so that we do not stumble at the inconsistency, when we call sprinkling *baptism*. But he

that shall confine himself unto the ideas conveyed by *scripture-language*, will perceive that to call sprinkling a *mode of baptism*, is to call sprinkling a mode of *bathing* or of *washing the body in water*. 'Tis to confound two rites entirely as distinct, as were *washing the body*, and *shaving off the hair*, in the purification of a leper. Accordingly the Christian church, the *whole* Christian church, for *thirteen hundred years* successively from the time of the Apostles, understood by baptism *immersion*, and so practised; *sprinkling* being only *permitted* upon extraordinary occasions. *Vid. Whitby's note on Romans vi. 4.*

Your Lordship [*Plain Account*, page 150.] observing, at least quoting Dr. *Clarke* as observing, that Baptism is stiled a being *buried with Christ*, and *rising with him again*, remarks, “ this expression made
“ use of by St. *Paul*, with relation to *bap-*
“ *tism*, is taken from the custom of *immer-*
“ *sion* in the first days, and from that par-
“ ticular manner of *baptizing* proselytes,

“ by which they were first *covered* with
 “ water, and in a state as it were of *death*
 “ and *inactivity*, and then arose out of it
 “ into a sort of new state of life and action.
 “ And if *baptism* had been then performed,
 “ as it is now amongst us, we should *ne-*
 “ *ver have so much as heard* of this form of
 “ expression, of *dying* and *arising again*, in
 “ this rite.”

By this your Lordship authorizes me to
 say, that in the *first days* Baptism was not
 performed as it is now amongst us. No,
 my Lord, it is now amongst us changed
 into *another thing* : not into a *different mode*
 of the *same* rite ; but into *another* and *diffe-*
rent rite. The first days say, that *baptism*
 was *immersion*. “ And whatever was truly
 “ necessary at first towards a right under-
 “ standing of this *institution*, was without
 “ doubt contained in the first and earliest
 “ accounts ; otherwise it must be said, that
 “ the *very first* Christians, who were called
 “ upon to perform this duty, and who
 “ actually *did perform it very frequently*,

“ were not fully instructed by the Apostles
 “ in it.” *Plain Account*, page 7.

According to the *first and earliest* accounts, that is, according to “ the *only*
 “ *authentic* declarations, upon which we of
 “ *latter* ages can *safely* depend ;” [*Plain*
Account, page 7.] When an *Apostle*, or
 other fit person said, I *baptize* thee in the
 name of the Father, &c. He meant, I *im-*
merge, plunge, dip thee in the name, &c.
 This your Lordship knows was the custom
 in the *first days* : so that when our Lord
 and Saviour sent forth the Apostles with
 this commission, Go teach all nations, *bap-*
tizing them : He meant *immerge* them. And
 so the *Apostles* actually understood him, for
 so they *practised*. And “ if Baptism had
 “ been then performed as it is now amongst
 “ us, we should never have so much as
 “ heard of this form of expression, of *dying*
 “ and *arising* again in this rite.” But
 “ the distance of *many* years has made a
 “ great alteration in mens language about
 “ *this* point,” joining together in one word

[baptize] *two, several, distinct* rites, which the Almighty has *always* put asunder. And from whom came the *established* change of the scriptural *baptism* into *another quite different* institution? Let the learned Dr. *Wall* answer, “it is a rule that does not
 “ fail in any particular that I know of,
 “ *viz.* All the nations that do now, or formerly did, submit to the authority of
 “ the *bishop of Rome*, do ordinarily baptize
 “ their infants by *pouring* or *sprinkling*.

“ But *all other* Christians in the world,
 “ who *never* owned the *Pope's* usurped
 “ power, do, and ever did, *dip* their infants in the ordinary use. And if we
 “ take the division of the world from the
 “ three main parts of it, *all* the Christians
 “ in *Asia*, all in *Africa*, and about *one*
 “ *third* part of *Europe*, are of the last sort,
 “ [*viz.* who understand by baptism *immersion*, and so practise]. In which third
 “ part of *Europe* are comprehended the
 “ Christians of *Græcia*, *Thracia*, *Servia*,
 “ *Bulgaria*, *Walachia*, *Moldavia*, *Russia*,

“ &c. and even the *Muscovites*, who, if
 “ *coldness* of the country will excuse, might
 “ plead for a dispensation with the most
 “ reason of any.” *Hist. Inf. Baptism*, part
 2. page 309, &c. edit. 1.

See here, my Lord, how the *immersion*
 of the *first days* came to be cast out, and set
 aside. The church of *Rome*, the *mother*
of abominations, who *thinketh to change times*
and laws, *Rev. xvii. Dan. vii.* She first
 set aside the common use of *dipping*; and
her example is followed by those protestant
 churches that were once under her tyranny
 and corruption; but by *none else*.

I am,

my Lord, &c.

LETTER III.

MY LORD,

I N order to settle right notions on the present subject, it cannot be too carefully attended to, that, in *holy scripture*, sprinkling, pouring, and washing or bathing the body, are always *distinct* rites, *never* confounded, or substituted one for another. If therefore it shall appear, that the *baptism* of scripture is nothing more or less than *washing the body*; not the hands, or feet, or face, or any other particular part; much less *sprinkling*, which the scripture *never* considers as any washing at all, but a rite intirely distinct from every kind of *lotion*; if, I say, *baptism* be *washing the body*, it will deserve and demand the *very serious consideration* of every one who is concerned to observe this as an *institution of God*, whether, and upon what principle, we may lay aside the *one only baptism* of scripture, and put *another thing* in the room of it?

And further, with respect to the practice of *modern* times (for sprinkling is but of *late* date in *England*) it may deserve also to be considered, whether there be in any part of the Bible any such religious ceremony, as *sprinkling water* on the face? If my reading does not deceive me, there does not appear in all the five books of *Moses* any rite of sprinkling *mere* water. There was a sprinkling of water mixed with blood, and of water mixed with the ashes of an heifer; but I think no such thing as sprinkling *simple* water. It is said indeed, *Ezek.* xxxvi. 25. Then will I *sprinkle clean water* upon you, and ye shall be clean; alluding, no doubt, to some watery purification in the law of *Moses*. But I have not been able to find any expositor, who could point out any ceremony of *unmixed* water, to which this refers. The only probable account I can find is, it refers to the *water of separation*, *Numb.* xix. called also *water*, simply; but this was really a *composition* of various ingredients, *viz.* the ashes of a burnt heifer,

cedar-wood, and hyſop, and ſcarlet, all mixed with the water. And in this caſe the unclean perſon was not only to be *ſprinkled* with this *mixture*, two ſeveral days, but, moreover, there was *another* quite diſtinct rite to be performed, even a *baptiſm*, verſe 19. And the clean perſon ſhall *ſprinkle* [the water of ſeparation] upon the unclean, on the third day, and on the ſeventh day. And on the ſeventh day he ſhall purify himſelf, and waſh his cloaths, and *bathe himſelf in water*. *Twice ſprinkled*, my Lord, and after that *once baptized*.

Washing the hands was a religious ceremony of divine appointment ; as alſo waſhing the *feet*. If then a clergyman ſhould waſh only the *hands*, or *feet* of the perſon to be *baptized*, and juſtify his practice by this text, *John xiii. 10. Jeſus ſaith to him, he that is waſhed needeth not ſave to waſh his feet, but is clean every whit*. I ſubmit it to your Lordſhip's conſideration, whether a miniſter has not as much [or

more] scriptural authority to practise thus, and solemnly use the name of the *holy Trinity* on this occasion, and call it *baptism*, as he has to *sprinkle the face*, or, as the custom is in *Switzerland*, to pour water on the *back part* of the head, * and call it *baptism*. All men, I doubt not, would cry out against this clergyman, as a *corrupter* of the sacrament of baptism. But why? Not because it is further removed from the *scripture-account* of baptism, [*viz.* a *washing the body* with pure water] than our present practice, but because it is not *customary*.

I now beg leave to lay before your Lordship those passages on *baptism*, whose *circumstances* assist in determining the *due manner* of this institution; and, if I introduce the remarks of learned men on some of these passages; I do it, not as if by their authority, be they ever so learned or nume-

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* Bishop Burnet's 2d Letter of his Travels.

rous, the point in question is to be decided; but, on this principle, *viz.* that it may fairly be presumed, a judicious and learned writer will not, *against* his own practice, acknowledge more; than what he feels himself *constrained* to grant, by the overbearing force and evidence of truth.

Mat. ili. 5, 6. Then went out to him *Jerusalem*, and all *Judea*, and all the region round about *Jordan*, and were baptized of him in *JORDAN*.

Verse 16. And *Jesus* when he was baptized went up straightway out of the water.

Mark i. 5. Were all baptized of him in the river of *Jordan*.

Verse 9, 10. *Jesus* was baptized in *JORDAN*: and straightway coming up out of the water.

*John iii. 23. John was baptizing in Enon, because there was much water there.**

Acts viii. 38, 39. They went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water.

Rom. vi. 4. Buried with him by baptism.

D 2

* In the Greek, *υδατα πολλα*, many waters, which some, either not knowing, or not attending to the Hebrew idiom, have fancied does not oblige us to understand of much or a large quantity of water. Whereas *υδατα πολλα* is only the Hebraism מים רבים. Now the singular number of this Hebrew substantive being not used, therefore the Greek version is sometimes *υδωρ* water, sometimes *υδατα* waters, though the Hebrew stands always the same. An example or two will suffice, instead of great numbers which might easily be produced. *Ezek. xxvi. 19. When I shall bring up the deep upon thee, and great waters [Greek υδωρ πολυ,] shall cover thee. Psalm lxxvii. 19. Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters. [Greek υδασι πολλοις.]* So that it is quite indifferent, whether you express much water by *υδωρ πολυ*, or *υδατα πολλα*. So the same river, in the same chapter, is *υδωρ*, water, and *υδατα*, waters, *Josh. iii.*

1 *Cor.* vi. 11. Ye are *washed* [απελυσασθε.] Note, λω is the word constantly used [except once βαπτίζω] in those very numerous places of the *Old Testament*, where *bathing the person* is commanded, as a *distinct* rite from all others of sprinkling, pouring, &c.

Ephes. v. 26. That he might cleanse it [the church] with the *washing* of water. [τῷ λουτρῷ]

Coloss. ii. 12. Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are *risen* with him.

Heb. x. 22. Our *bodies washed* with pure water. [λελουμένοι.]

Every circumstance, of chusing a *river* to baptize in, of going *down into* the water, and coming *up out of* the water, both the *baptizer* and the *baptized*; and the allusions to a *burial* and *rising again*; and of singling out a place proper for baptism, for this only reason, *because there was much*

water there: all these circumstances are quite proper and natural to the custom of *immersion*. But it is hard to account for the mentioning or pertinence of them upon any other interpretation of baptism.

According to the custom of our day, my Lord, a single bason of water will suffice for a great multitude. And if the institution may be satisfied this way, to what purpose were the multitudes obliged to leave their cities and towns for the sake of coming at a *river*? What reason is there in chusing a place *because there is much water*, if much water were *not necessary*? There is not a town or village, but would equally well have served for the place of *baptizing*, according to *modern* custom.

The *Greek church* observes, on *Jesus* coming up out of the water of *Jordan* after his baptism, *Mat. iii. 16.* that “ he
“ who *ascended* out of the water must
“ first *descend* down into it. Baptism

“ therefore is to be performed, *not by*
 “ *sprinkling but by washing the body.*” And
 indeed, says Dr. *Whitby in loc.* “ it can
 “ only be from ignorance of the Jewish
 “ rites in baptism, that this is *questioned* ;
 “ for they, to the due performance of this
 “ rite, so superstitiously required *the im-*
 “ *mersion of the whole body*, that if any dirt
 “ hindered the water from coming to any
 “ part of it, the baptism was not right ;
 “ and if one held the baptized person by
 “ the arm when he was let down into the
 “ water, another must after dip him,
 “ holding him by the other arm that was
 “ washed before, because his hand would
 “ not suffer the water to come to his
 “ whole body.”

Mr. *Baxter*, in his *Paraphrase on the*
New Testament, [one of the last books he
 published, in a good *old age*, when the
 heat of controversy may be supposed well
 over] observes on *Mat. iii. 6.* “ We
 “ grant that baptism then was by *washing*
 “ *the whole body*; and did not the differ-

“ ence of our *cold* country, as to that hot
 “ one, teach us to remember [I will
 “ have mercy and not sacrifice] *it should*
 “ *be so here.*”

The same writer thus paraphrases *Rom.*
vi. 4. “ Therefore in our baptism we
 “ are *dipped under the water*, as signifying
 “ we are *dead and buried to sin.*” Again,
 “ *Coloss. ii. 12.* is thus paraphrased by
 him, “ They [your-lusts] are dead and
 “ buried with him, for so your *baptism*
 “ signifieth, in which you are *put under*
 “ *the water*, to signify and profess that
 “ your old man is dead and buried, &c.”
 Once more, on *1 Peter iii. 21.* “ When
 “ we are raised to holiness by his Spi-
 “ rit, as *we rise out of the water in bap-*
 “ *tism, &c.*”

But why, it may be asked, so particu-
 lar with Mr. *Baxter*? For the sake, my
 Lord, of the *Pædobaptist dissenters*, if these
 letters should fall into their hands, that
 they may see the opinion [as to what was

scriptural baptism] of a man justly held in high esteem amongst them. The excuse of him and many others, for laying aside the *scripture-baptism*, confessed to be the *scripture-baptism*, and for substituting in the room of it *another* rite, *intirely another* rite, shall be considered in the next letter,

I am,

my Lord, &c.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

MY LORD,

I Am afraid, your Lordship, by this time, begins to think me *tedious*. You do not want all this labour of proof, that the *scripture-baptism* is *immersion*. You know it: you own it: you bear witness publicly, before all the world, that baptism as NOW performed amongst us, is NOT KNOWN in the *New Testament*, the repository of the *only authentic* declarations concerning this duty; for “if baptism had been THEN performed as it is NOW amongst us, we should never have so much as heard of this form of expression, of *dying* and *arising* again in this rite”.

My Lord, I presume not the attempt of informing you; but beg you will allow me the favour to stand up before you, an equitable and most capable judge, as a

pleader in support of a matter of TRUTH and RIGHT almost entirely cast out from our part of the world.

I say, *a matter of truth and right*, almost intirely cast out from *our* part of the world. For, thanks be to God, in other parts there are still *millions*, amongst whom the *New Testament* rite, that is, the *divine* rite of *immersion*, is still preserved. The vast *Russian* empire hold it fast, and *all other Churches*, who never submitted to the tyranny of the *Church of Rome*. But to return, I would desire any man, capable of the enquiry, to consider with meekness and candour these two Things: First, whether the *Greek* of the *New Testament*, be not borrowed from the *Septuagint*, the *Greek* of the *Old Testament*.*

If the case be so, then let it be considered, secondly, whether it were *possible*

* Note, That St. Paul, even to the *Hebrews*, quoted from the *lxx.* is proved in sundry examples by bishop Pearson in his learned preface to the *Septuagint*.

for the *New Testament* writers to chuse out from all the *Greek* of the *Old Testament* two words that can *more* precisely, and determinately [if *so* determinately] express and specify *that one particular* ceremony of washing the whole body, as distinct from *all other* purifications and washings, than the two words they have actually chosen, *viz.* βαπτίζω and λᾶω, to which add its compound ἀπολᾶω?

It has been already observed, that βαπτω would scarce have done so well, it being not used in the *Septuagint* in any one place, I believe, where the very frequent ceremony of *washing the whole body* occurs. But supposing baptism were expressed in scripture by βαπτω, a word which undoubtedly means *dipping*, if any word in the *Greek* tongue can mean it; yet, my Lord, a man disposed rather to hide and shun truth than embrace it, might find ways and means to get shift even of *this* word; thus—He reads in *Dan.* iv. 33. That *Nebuchadnezzar* was

driven from man, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body *was wet with the dew of heaven*. He reads the same again, chap. v. ver. 21. But how is this in the *Greek* of those passages? It is thus: ἀπο τῆς ὀροῦ τῆ ἕραν το σωμα αὐτῆ ΕΒΑΦΗ. [*dipt*] Now we all know, that a person is wet with dew, not by *immersion* into it, but by its distillation in gentle drops, we are *sprinkled* by it. Hence, in scripture and common language, *drop as the dew*, and *drops of dew*. A clear proof, that βαπτω signifies to *sprinkle*. And thus, my Lord, there is *no* word, whose literal, strict and proper meaning may not be evaded, whenever an *allusive* and *metaphorical* sense can be found. Its *literal* sense, even where there is no possible room for *figure*, may be thrown aside, and the *figurative* import brought in, whenever it is convenient to serve an *hypothesis*. And so I have known it actually fare with the offspring of βαπτω, viz. βαπτίζω, particularly in i

Corinth. x. 2. And were all baptized into Moses in the cloud, and in the sea.

What every school-boy, capable of looking into his lexicon, knows to be the strict *literal* meaning of the word, is set aside, where it occurs only in its *literal* import, by the help of a few circumstances in a mere *figure* and *allusion*; thus, the *cloud*, which hung over the children of *Israel*, is a watery substance, *sprinkling* its water in *drops*. The *sea*, which was *as a wall unto them on the right hand and on the left*; by the force of the strong wind which blew, sent forth a great spray or sprinkling. So they were plentifully *sprinkled* by the cloud above, and by the waters on each side.

But a man of plain sense, not thinking of this cloud or pillar of *fire*, dropping down *water*; but of opinion, with your Lordship, that the baptism of scripture is *immersion*, would be apt to carry his thoughts no farther than to appre-

hend, here is an allusion to the custom of *immersion*; the *Israelites* being as it were *covered* by the cloud *over*, and the waters on *each side* of them. Or as *Grotius*, on the place, expresses it, “ The
 “ cloud was *over their head*: so also is the
 “ water *over the head* of those who are
 “ baptized. The sea *encompassed* their
 “ sides: so also does the water *encompass*
 “ those who are baptized.” “ *Nubes im-*
 “ *pendebat illorum capiti: Sic & aqua iis*
 “ *qui baptizantur. Mare circumdabat*
 “ *eorum latera: Sic & aqua eos qui bapti-*
 “ *zantur.*”

We who are so little used to washing the whole body, either in a common or religious way, are apt to wonder, where, and how, such prodigious numbers, as are mentioned in the *New Testament* to be baptized, could be *accommodated* if they were immersed in water? But, my Lord, it needs only to be considered, the principal scene of baptism lay in a country, where *immersion* was quite *familiar*,

and *must*, by the very laws of their religion, come into *daily* use through all parts of the land; and then the wonder will cease. For, as bishop *Patrick* observes, “ there are so many washings pre-
 “ scribed [in the law of *Moses*] that it is
 “ reasonable to believe, there were not
 “ only at *Jerusalem*, and in all other ci-
 “ ties, but in every village several bathing
 “ places contrived for these legal purifica-
 “ tions, that men might, without much
 “ labour, be capable to fulfil these pre-
 “ cepts.” *Comment on Lev. xv. 12.*

I come now, my Lord, to what was promised in the last letter, *viz.* to consider the *excuse* of those, who, though they confess the *scriptural baptism* to be *immersion*, yet apologize for a departure from it; and, of two quite different distinct laws and institutions, put one in the room of the other. In consequence thereof, it is come to that pass, that what at first was done *but seldom*, and in supposed cases of urgent necessity, is now become the uni-

versal, constant practice ; and the *one* baptism, the *acknowledged* one baptism of scripture is *intirely cast out*, in favour of ANOTHER RITE ; except among a handful of people, who still preserve the primitive form.

Mr. *Baxter*, we have already seen, excuses the matter by the *coldness* of our climate. *Calvin*, the celebrated reformer at *Geneva*, observes, in his exposition of *Acts* viii. 38. “ We see here what was the
 “ baptismal rite among the *ancients*; for
 “ they *plunged the whole body in the water*.
 “ Now ’tis the custom for the minister to
 “ *sprinkle* only the body or head.” And he too excuses this *sprinkling*; but how I cannot well recollect, having not his book at hand. Bishop *Burnet*, though he thus describes the primitive baptism,
 “ With no other garments but what might
 “ serve to cover nature ; they at first *laid*
 “ *them down in the water*, as a man is
 “ laid in a *grave*, and then they said
 “ these words, “ *I baptize, or wash thee*;

“ *in the name, &c.* Then they raised
 “ them up again, and clean garments
 “ were put on them : from whence came
 “ the phrases of being *baptized into*
 “ *Christ’s death*, of being *buried with*
 “ *him by baptism into death* : of our be-
 “ *ing risen with Christ*, and of our *put-*
 “ *ting on the Lord Jesus Christ*, of *putting*
 “ *off the old man*, and *putting on the new.*”

And though he justly observes, “ sacra-
 “ ments are *positive* precepts, which are
 “ to be measured only by the *institution*,
 “ in which there is *not room* left for us
 “ to carry them any farther ;” yet, for-
 getting his own measure of the institution,
viz. the party baptized was laid down in the
water, as a man is laid in the grave, “ He
 “ says, the danger of *dipping* in cold cli-
 “ mates may be a very good reason for
 “ *changing* the form of baptism to *sprink-*
 “ *ling.*” *Expos. xxxix Articles, pages*
 226, 300, 346, *Edit. 1.*

But, as the good Bishop observes, in the
 page last cited, on the other sacrament, and

the *change* made therein by the church of *Rome*, “ All reasoning upon this head is
 “ an arguing *against the institution*; as if
 “ *Christ* and his apostles had not well
 “ *considered* it; but that 1200 years after
 “ them, a consequence should be ob-
 “ served, that till then had not been
 “ *thought of*, which made it reasonable to
 “ *alter the manner of it*. He who insti-
 “ tuted it knew best, what was most fit-
 “ ting and most reasonable; and we
 “ must choose rather to *acquiesce in his*
 “ *commands*, than in our own reasonings.”

Page 347.

It is evident to your Lordship, that when our blessed Saviour said unto the apostles, *Go, teach all nations, baptizing them*, they understood him to mean *dipping*. Here then is *one* only rule and law for *all nations*. No provision for making a difference between *warm* climates and *cold*. Not the least hint of *two* rites, of which the administrator may take his *choice*, according to his own prudence and

discretion; but there is *one* law, *one* institution, for all nations upon the face of the earth; *Go, teach and dip them.* Why then, my Lord, do we not acquiesce in this command, but change it by our own reasoning?

But I beg leave to say two or three things in particular to the plea for this *confessed* alteration.

First, Coldness of climate is an excuse which, make the best of it, can serve but for some part of the year, and for some weakly constitutions; and yet the practice of *sprinkling* is universal and constant, in the hot season as well as cold, and on the most robust and healthy as well as the weak. The reason offered in justification of the *new* way implies, that were it not for *necessity*, the *primitive baptism* should be observed; nevertheless, it is not observed, where no shadow of necessity is pretended. Such commonly is the end

and effect of departing from our rule: Human nature falls in with what is least troublesome. We first plead a necessity of relaxing in certain cases; these cases continually multiply in favour of *ease* and *indulgence*, and then *custom* carries all before it. Dr. *Wall*, giving the reasons why in queen *Elizabeth's* reign the custom of *dipping* was laid aside, observes, “ It being allowed to *weak* children to be baptized by *affusion*, many fond ladies and gentlewomen first, and then by degrees the common people, would obtain the favour of the priest to have *their* children pass for weak children, too tender to endure *dipping* in the water.” Vol. 2. page 301. Edit. 1.

Secondly, *Immersion* was the constant practice in this same *cold* climate for many *hundred years* (the change into *sprinkling*, as a general practice, being scarce two hundred years old) and yet I believe no history can be produced of its having been of ill consequence even to infants. Take

the affair only in a *medical* view, and cold bathing is not only *safe*, but very *useful*, many times, to tender babes, which made the late Dr. *Cheyne* say, “ I cannot sufficiently admire how it [cold bathing] should ever have come into such disuse, especially among *Christians*, when commanded by the greatest lawgiver that ever was, under the direction of God’s holy Spirit, to his chosen people, and *perpetuated to us* in the *immersion* at baptism *by the same Spirit*, who, with infinite wisdom, in this, as in every thing else, that regards the temporal and eternal felicity of his creatures, combines their *duty* with their *happiness*.” *Essay on Health, &c.* Chap. 4. Sect. 7.

Thirdly, The rule [God will have mercy and not sacrifice] may justly be applied to excuse from *baptism itself*, [that is, as I understand it, from *immersion*] those who cannot receive it without manifest *danger*; but, I think, will by no means justify a

change of *baptism* into another quite different rite. For illustration sake, my Lord, I beg leave to mention the case of an old-testament rite, *circumcision*.

It was a divine appointment, that this rite should be observed with respect to every *Jewish* male at eight days old. Yet during the *Israelites* travel through the wilderness, for the space of *forty years*, it was omitted. The reason of which was the danger and great inconvenience that must arise from it, in their travelling unsettled condition. *Vide Patrick* and other expositors on *Joshua* v. But suppose the *Jews*, from the undoubted inconvenience of circumcising the part appointed, had reasoned themselves into the practice of circumcising a *finger* or *toe*, would not this have been an unwarrantable departure from the institution of God? Unquestionably it would. Who required *this* at their hand? And especially would they not be chargeable with a notorious perversion of a plain positive precept, if, from this plea of necessity in the wilder-

ness, they should take occasion to make the change *total* and *perpetual*, upon all persons, and in all times? And how long soever this alteration had prevailed, would it not be justifiable, and matter of commendation, nay even *duty*, in those persons who *saw* the deviation from the declared will of the Institutor, to reject this circumcision of *human device*, and restore it to its first institution? We must think so, unless the antiquity of error excuse it, and make that right, which at first was wrong.

If therefore baptism *was originally immersion*, let it be immersion still; for, as your most learned friend Dr. S. Clarke has observed, “ In things of *external appointment*, and *mere positive* institution, where we cannot, as in matters of *natural* and *moral* duty, argue concerning the *natural reason* and *ground* of the obligation, and the *original necessity* of the thing itself; *we have nothing to do but to obey the positive command*. God

“ is infinitely better able than we, to
 “ judge of the *propriety* and *usefulness* of
 “ the things he institutes; and it be-
 “ comes us to *obey* with humility and
 “ reverence.” *Expos. Church Cat.* page
 305, &c. Edit. 2.

Your Lordship will suffer me to add,
 there is *not* so great a difference between
 circumcising a *finger* and the *foreskin*, as
 between covering the *whole body in water*,
 and *sprinkling the face*. It would be *circumcision* still, only of a different part; but
bathing and *sprinkling*, the book of God
always considers as *two* institutions quite
distinct.

In what has been advanced in these
 Letters, your Lordship knows, I have been
 pleading for a *return* of the *ancient primitive*
 baptism of the church. I am sorry
 that fonts of *modern* structure are so dwindle
 in size, that an infant cannot be *dip*
 in them; and shall be very glad if we are
 recovered to so just a sense of the *divine*

authority in this institution, as to conclude we have nothing to do but observe the positive command, and with humility and reverence obey the original institution, that is, to dip the party baptized in the name, &c.

For if your Lordship's observation be right, that "the *due manner* of performing this positive duty depends entirely upon the will and declaration of him who institutes or ordains it;" and *no manner* is declared by him, but that *immersion*, which, you say, was the custom in the *first and only authentic days*; your Lordship then instructs me to conclude, that to follow any *direction*, which turns us off from this *immersion*, is, so far, making it *our own* institution, and not the institution of *him* who first appointed it.

I am, my Lord,

*Your Lordship's most obedient
humble Servant.*

LETTER

LETTER V.

My Lord,

IF baptism be any thing at all to *us*; if any religious regard be due to it, it is from its being a divine command, not confined to the first converts to christianity, but reaching to us. Whoever believeth not so is guilty of presumption, to do that *in the name of the Lord*, which the Lord requireth not. It is far from the simplicity and godly-sincerity of the gospel, to put on the appearance of a most *sacred* and *solemn* transaction *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, if, in our conscience, we believe this is no part of the will of God reaching to us. If baptism be an institution designed by *Jesus Christ* for all ages of the Christian Church, let us treat it with religious regard: if we be otherwise minded, let us be so honest

and faithful to religion, and to the world, as to lay it aside.

The former Letters enquired into the *manner* of this rite: or what the New Testament intends by the action of *baptizing*. The result of our enquiry was this: *The phraseology of the New Testament is taken from the SEPTUAGINT, or Greek translation of the Old:* and such words, and only such words, are used to express the action of *baptizing*, as *there* denote and specify, precisely, that particular precept of *bathing*, or covering the whole body in water; a rite perfectly distinct from, and never confounded with any other rite of *sprinkling, pouring, &c.*

And I beg leave once more to propose it to public consideration,—Whether it is possible, agreeably to the Language of the Old Testament, to chuse out words that shall, more precisely, and strongly, convey the idea of *immersion*, than what the Evangelists and Apostles have actually chosen,

when they speak of *baptism*? — Could any one have helped them to apter and more determinate language, on *supposition* that they wanted and designed to express to their brethren and country-men that familiar and frequent practice amongst them, of washing the whole body?—If the Spirit which inspired the Apostles, had given them a foresight of the controversies which have arisen on this head, could they have fixed on words better adapted to prevent such controversies? to prevent its being ever said, “ The Language of the New-
 “ Testament concerning this duty is so
 “ indeterminate and lax, that it matters
 “ not, whether, in baptism, you cover
 “ the whole body, or apply a little water
 “ to a part of it.”—Let scripture be its own interpreter, comparing one part with another.

Have not then the New Testament-writers taken from their own scriptures that language, and all that language, and, I think it may be added, only that

language, which expresses the *one, only* usage so often specified by *bathing* the flesh, or person, in water?

It is easy for a reader, though of good understanding, to lose himself amidst clouds and darkness, if he knows nothing of the learned languages, when the books he reads draw him to the perusal of disputes about the sense and meaning of an *unknown tongue*.

But as the whole of the affair, so far as we have yet gone, turns upon one short plain question; so every man of common sense can observe, whether a person of candour, and allowed to be a capable judge, will give his answer *yea*, or *no*. The short, plain question is this. Is there ground and reason to conclude, the writers of the New Testament would have used *other* expressions, if they had intended that one rite of *immersion*? If so, what are those *other* expressions? — This is

bringing the matter to a short and plain issue.

I believe, my Lord, the most exact and rigorous examination of the foregoing queries will end in this conclusion: That by the sacramental baptism of water, the *New Testament* means, precisely and only, *immersion* in water.

So that the learned Mr. *Selden*, who lived a little after immersion grew out of use, had too much reason to say, “ In
“ *England*, of late years, I ever thought,
“ the Parson *baptized his own Fingers*, rather than the *Child*.” *Selden’s Works*, Vol. VI. Col. 2008.

If these things are so ; then there is another consideration, deserving the attention of *Protestants* ; namely, What reply shall we make to the *Papists* ? Who insist upon it, they do not *more* change and innovate in the administration of the *Lord’s Supper*, by withholding the *Cup* from the *Laity*,

than we do in the administration of *baptism*, by setting aside *immersion*, and substituting *sprinkling* or *pouring* in its place. We call theirs a *half-communion*; and justly, because they withhold the wine. What if they call ours, on the same ground, a *half-baptism*? How shall we reply? I doubt the *Papists* will ever remain unanswered by a consistent Protestant, until he confesses *immersion* the *only* baptism: and that it cannot be proved, the church of *Rome* has more departed from the Christian rule, in their manner of administering the *Lord's Supper*, than we have in our manner of administering *Baptism*.

I wish this matter may be duly considered; that we may *take off occasion from those who seek occasion* to support themselves in error. A sensible Roman Catholic, who knows his strength, or perhaps rather our weakness; will always retort upon us, “ Shew us your authority for laying
“ aside the primitive and scriptural im-

“ *merſion*; and we will produce our au-
 “ thority for withholding the cup from
 “ the Laity.”

I come now, my Lord, to what was promiſed at the concluſion of the former LETTER; namely, to enquire into the *nature* and *end* of Chriſtian Baptiſm. Throughout which enquiry, I ſhall carefully keep in ſight, as a ſure guide, the two following propoſitions of your Lordſhip.

I. “ All *poſitive* duties, or duties made ſuch by *inſtitution* alone, depend entirely on the *will* and *declaration* of the Perſon who inſtitutes or ordains them, with reſpect to the real deſign and end of them.”

II. “ The paſſages in the *New Teſta-ment*, which relate to this duty, and they alone, are the original accounts of the *nature* and *end* of this inſtitution, and the only authentic declarations, upon which we of later ages can *ſafely depend*; being

written by the immediate followers of our *Lord*; those who were witnesses themselves of the institution; or were instructed by those who were so; and join with them in delivering down one and the same account of this religious duty."

The author of a well known book, entitled *The Moral Philosopher*, written in favour of infidelity, would have it, "that
 " baptism and the Lord's Supper are not
 " Christian institutions, because the ex-
 " ternal elementary parts of these sacra-
 " ments were in use before, as national
 " rites, usages, &c. amongst the *Jews*."

To him Dr. *Leland* returns this plain, satisfactory answer: " But that which
 " makes any thing to be properly a *Chri-*
 " *stian institution*, is, its being instituted
 " or appointed by *Christ* himself, to be
 " observed in his church: if therefore
 " Baptism and the Lord's Supper were
 " thus instituted or appointed by *Christ*

“ himself, they are, properly speaking,
 “ Christian institutions, and it doth not
 “ alter the case, whether we suppose
 “ them, with regard to the outward ele-
 “ mentary part of them, to have been
 “ among the *Jews* before, or not.” Vid.
Leland’s Answer to the Moral Philosopher.
 Edit. 1. page 478, 479.

The first account of baptism, as a *Chri-
 stian institution*, is in *Matt. xxviii. 19.*
*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations; bap-
 tizing them into the name of the Father, and
 of the Son, and of the holy Ghost.*

The plain sense and meaning of which
 words cannot be better expressed than in
 the following paraphrase of Doctor *S.*
Clarke, viz. “ Go therefore and preach
 “ the gospel to all the world, making
 “ disciples out of every nation, and bap-
 “ tizing them with water *in the name*,
 “ &c. that is, receiving them to a *pro-
 fession of the belief*, and an obligation
 “ to the practice of that religion, which

“ God the Father has revealed and
 “ taught by his Son, and confirmed and
 “ established by the Holy Ghost.”

St. *Mark* gives the same account of this institution, though in different words. *Mark* xvi. 15, 16. *And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.* That is, saith the above Paraphrast, “ Preach
 “ the gospel to all mankind. He that
 “ embraces my religion, and by baptism
 “ enters into an obligation to obey it,
 “ and lives accordingly, shall be saved:
 “ but he that rejects the gospel, either
 “ by obstinate unbelief, or by impeni-
 “ tent disobedience, shall be damned.”

It is certain, the Scripture makes a difference between the baptisms of *John* and *Christ*; for the same persons who had already received *John's* baptism, were

baptized a second time *in the name of the Lord Jesus*, Acts xix. 3, 4, 5.

The chief distinctions are these following:

I. The baptism of *John* was confined to the *Jews*: but Christian Baptism is appointed for *all nations*.

John took his station by the river *Jordan*, for the convenience of immersing the great multitudes that resorted to him: *and there went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins*, Matt. iii. 5, 6, 7. But *Christ* coming, *a light to enlighten the Gentiles*, as well as for *the glory of his people Israel*; therefore his baptism is appointed for the *Gentiles* as well as *Jews*. *Go, teach all nations, baptizing them*, saith St. *Matthew*. And St. *Mark*, *Preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth* [whoever be-

lieveth, whether Jew or Gentile] and is baptized, shall be saved.

II. *John* baptized the people to *prepare* them for the faith of the Messiah *about to come* or *just coming*: but Christian baptism is declarative of faith in the Messiah *not coming, but come.*

This distinction is proved by the following texts.

Acts xix. 4. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. John i. 31. That he [Christ] should be made manifest to Israel; therefore am I come baptizing with water.

But Jesus being declared, manifested, proved to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead; and all power being actually given to him in

heaven and in earth; therefore, Christian baptism is *into the name of the Son*, so manifested, as well as *of the Father*, Matt. xxviii. 18, 19.

III. The Scripture, I think, affords ground also for this distinction, *viz.* Christian baptism teacheth expressly faith in the *Holy Spirit*; which doth not appear to be any part of the instruction necessary at *John's* baptism: for the disciples at *Ephesus*, who had been baptized unto *John's* baptism, tell St. Paul, *They had not so much as heard, whether there be any holy Ghost*, Acts xix. 2.

Some learned divines make another *very great and important* difference between the two baptisms; that is, *John's* baptism *excluded infants*, but Christian baptism *includes them*.

Dr. *Whitby* observes, “ It is not to be

“ wondered at that *infants* were not
 “ baptized during *John’s* ministry; be-
 “ cause the baptism thus used by *John*
 “ and *Christ’s* disciples, [*viz.* before
 the institution of *Christian baptism*] “ was
 “ only the baptism of *repentance*, and
 “ *faith* in the Messiah which was for
 “ to come; of both which infants were
 “ incapable.” *Annotat. in* Matt. xix.
 13, 14. He says the same in his *Differ-*
tation on Matthew xxviii. 19.

Turretin, Divinity-Professor at *Geneva*,
 says, *John* admitted *none* to baptism but
 such as confessed their sins; because
 his business lay in baptizing the *adult*,
 &c. “ *Johannes neminem ad baptis-*
 “ *mum admittebat, nisi confitentem peccata*
 “ *sua, quia agebatur de adultis baptizandis,*
 “ &c.” *Turret. Instit.* Vol. III. page
 468.

How far this sentiment (that the

baptism of *John* excluded infants, but that yet they have a right to Christian baptism) is agreeable to scripture, shall next be considered.

I am, my Lord,

*Your Lordship's most obedient
humble Servant.*

LETTER

L E T T E R VI.

MY LORD,

W Hsoever will give himself the trouble to look back on the first part of these Letters, and read the texts produced concerning *John's* baptism, will, I believe, perceive no footstep in them of *his* baptizing infants: nor is there any declaration, or the least hint, that the disciples of *Christ*, before his death, baptized any but grown people. As Dr. *Whitby* observes, “ They only baptized, “ as *John* had done, into the faith of “ the Messiah which was to come; and “ with that baptism of repentance, which “ prepared the *Jews* for the reception “ of his kingdom. — It is not therefore “ to be wondered, that they baptized “ not those *infants*, who could not, by “ an actual repentance, prepare them-

“ selves for the coming of that Messiah,
 “ who was then at hand.” *Whitby’s*
Dissert. on Matt. xxviii. 19.

The disciples of Christ, during his ministry on earth, as well as the disciples of *John*, were very well acquainted with the institution of baptism; for they themselves baptized great multitudes. *The Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples, John iv. 1, 2.* But they administered a baptism in which infants had *no part*. When therefore our blessed Saviour, after his resurrection, instituted *his* sacrament of baptism, if infants were to be received to it, “ It cannot be doubted that he himself sufficiently *declared* this to his first
 “ and immediate followers; which sufficient and only authentic declaration
 “ must appear in some passage of the
 “ New Testament.”

There seems the greatest reason *to* expect some express declaration on this head; because, otherwise, men, who had hitherto been *used to exclude infants*, and to look upon them *no way concerned* in the ordinance of baptism, would be likely still to pass them by, and not think of them as coming within the reach of their fresh commission. Men who, during *John's* ministry, had already baptized an infinite multitude of the *adult only* amongst the *Jews*, would naturally conclude, on their being sent forth to practise the *same rite* amongst the *Gentiles*, that with them also the *adult only* were proper subjects, unless there appeared something upon the face of their commission to teach them otherwise.

The baptism of infants being *hitherto uncommanded*, concerning which God had given them nothing in charge; it will seem quite necessary they should have some plain, clear, determinate instruc-

tions on this head; especially and above all in this sort of duty, which owes *all* its obligation and *all* its virtue to *positive command*: I say it will seem quite necessary they should have some plain, determinate instructions, if they were, for the future, to give baptism to persons to whom they had not been used, nor directed to give it.

And this will seem yet more reasonable to be expected, if in process of time, and where Christianity came to be the established religion, the *first completion* and *express import* of this rite were to undergo such a *change*, that, instead of being the sign of *repentance* towards God, and *faith* towards our Lord Jesus Christ, in the party baptized; it should, universally, be administered at an age and time of life when the baptized know nothing about repentance and faith.

This, my Lord, is actually the case in

all Christian countries. Baptism is not, as it was in the beginning, a sign of repentance and faith in the person baptized. Babes of a few days old know nothing of these things: and yet these are, according to all *legal establishments*, the only subjects of it, except, what happens very rarely, the baptism of *profelytes*.

Let us now examine the passages of the New Testament, and see whether Jesus Christ has by himself, or his immediate followers, *declared* that infants are the subjects of this institution.

The first account of baptism as a Christian ordinance is *Matt. xxviii. 19.* *Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost.* Which commission is, in *St. Mark xvi. 15, 16.* thus expressed, *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall*

be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.

The only difference in the accounts of these two Evangelists is, that *Matthew* in his expression *teach*, [μαθητευσατε, *disciple*] all nations, is more *concise* than *Mark*, who instead of it says, *preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth, &c.*

It may not be impertinent to observe, that the word in *Matthew* rendered [*teach*] is not the word commonly rendered *teach* in the New Testament. The word commonly used is [διδασκω] which occurs very often: but the other word [μαθητευω, *teach*] in the baptismal commission of *Matthew*, is used only three times more in all the New Testament. *Matt.* xiii. 52. *Every scribe WHICH IS INSTRUCTED* [μαθητευθεις] *into the kingdom of heaven.* *Matt.* xxvii. 57. *Joseph who also himself WAS JESUS'S DISCIPLE* [μαθητευσε τω

1708]. Acts xiv. 21. *When they had preached the gospel to that city, and HAD TAUGHT many* [μαθητευσάντες]. They did not barely *preach the gospel*, but *taught* so effectually as to *prevail* on many to become *disciples*, or *believers*. This is the plain import of the original.

The common appellation of *Christian believers*, occurring in very numerous passages of the New Testament, is [μαθηταί] *disciples*. As this is the usual name of believers in *Christ*, we have the verb of it in our Lord's commission, where he bids his followers to go and make *converts* to him throughout the world. So that whereas μαθητεω implies *teaching*, full as much as the more common word [διδασκω], the difference is, that the former has a more precise and determinate meaning; conveying to the apostles this idea, viz. *So teach the people*, as to persuade them to become *my disciples*.

I do not dislike the rendering, *disciple* all nations; provided the idea of *teaching* make a *necessary* part of it, and that *disciple* and *baptize* be not taken for synonymous terms, as some make them, I think, without any foundation in scripture, or just criticism. As in *John* iv. 1. μαθητας ποιει και βαπτιζει contain *two distinct* ideas, viz. first to *make disciples*, and then to *baptize* them; so *Matt.* xxviii. 19. μαθητευσατε, βαπτιζοντες, express the same two distinct ideas; viz. *make disciples*, and *baptize* them. First *convert* them to the faith of Christ; and when that is done, *baptize* them *.

* “ Μαθητευειν here is to *preach the gospel* to all nations, and to engage them to *believe* it in order to their
 “ *profession of that faith by baptism*; as seems apparent
 “ (1) from the parallel commission *Mark* xvi. 15. Go,
 “ *preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth, and*
 “ *is baptized, shall be saved.* (2) From the scripture no-
 “ *tion of a disciple*, that being still the same as a *believer*.
 “ — I desire any one to tell me, how the apostles could
 “ μαθητευειν, *make a disciple*, of an *Heathen*, or un-
 “ *believing Jew*, without being μαθηται, or *teachers* of

I submit these few remarks to your Lordship's better judgment and skill. And if they are true, then, I suppose, all that the apostles could learn from the *commission* is, that whereas they had been used before to teach the *Jews*, and to baptize such *only of them* as professed to receive and believe their doctrine; they were henceforth to enlarge their plan; and, preaching *to all sorts of people*, to baptize those who *believed* their report. So their commission expressly runs: *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth* [your doctrine] *and is baptized, &c.*

Your Lordship instructs me to say,
 “ It cannot be doubted Jesus Christ suf-
 “ ficiently declared to his first and im-
 “ mediate followers the *whole* of what
 G

“ them, whether they were not sent to preach to them
 “ that could hear, &c.”

Wesley's Note on Matt. xxviii. 19.

“ he designed should be understood by,
 “ or implied in this duty; for this being
 “ a positive institution, depending en-
 “ tirely upon his will, and not designed
 “ to contain *any thing* in it, but what he
 “ himself should please to *affix* to it; it
 “ must follow that he *declared* his mind
 “ about it *fully* and *plainly*: because
 “ otherwise, he must be supposed to in-
 “ stitute a duty, of which no one could
 “ have *any notion* without his institution,
 “ and at the same time, not to instruct
 “ his followers *sufficiently* what that duty
 “ was to be.”

Now your Lordship will suffer me to
 ask, where has Jesus Christ *declared* his
 mind, and declared it *fully* and *plainly*
 that infants are to receive Christian bap-
 tism? It may be seen plainly enough,
 that he sent forth his apostles to gather
 a people to himself: to make *disciples*,
converts, *believers*, in all nations; and that
 nothing hindered their being baptized,

if they believed. But with regard to any part of the human species *not* so qualified, is there not, I appeal to your Lordship, an *intire profound silence*? Is not our Saviour's commission, far from declaring fully and plainly in favour of children's baptism, perfectly silent on this head? Does it say more than this; *make disciples, converts, believers, amongst all nations, and baptize them?*

If our Lord's commission expresses no more, then I observe it is a rule readily admitted, that a limited commission amounts to a *prohibition* of the things not therein contained, as in the case of another positive institution, circumcision; the order, every *man-child* shall be circumcised; is, we all know, a *prohibition* with regard to the *female*.

But if it should be thought there is some obscurity in so brief an account as this of *Matthew* and *Mark*, the *subsequent*

practice of the apostles must be owned the best and only *authentic* explanation and comment on their master's law. This shall be next considered.

I am,

my Lord, &c.

LETTER

L E T T E R VII.

WE are now, my Lord, to consider the *practice* of the *apostles* and *first teachers*, as the best and only authentic comment on their master's law.

The first mention of baptism *administered* after Christ's ascension is *Acts* ii. 38, 41. *Then Peter said unto them, REPENT, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the holy Ghost. Then they THAT GLADLY RECEIVED HIS WORD were baptized.*

There never was a better opportunity for the apostles to shew, clearly and fully, the whole of what they understood by Christian baptism, than this recorded in *Acts* ii. It was one of those great festivals,

when devout people were come together at Jerusalem out of every nation under heaven, and when the disciples received such an effusion of the *holy Ghost* as excited all men's curiosity and astonishment. *They were all amazed and marvelled; and asked, What meaneth this?* Upon this, Peter stood up with the eleven, and preached Christ to them so effectually, that *they were pricked in the heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?* Then Peter said unto them, *Repent, and be baptized, &c. for the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.* What was the effect and consequence of this sermon? It was this; *Then they that GLADLY RECEIVED HIS WORD were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls: and they continued stedfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers.*

When these men under deep concern, *pricked in their heart*, ask direction and advice, saying, *What shall we do?* and Peter instructs them to *repent and be baptized*; does he say also, bring your offspring to baptism? Nothing of this: but all that the history relates is, *They that gladly received his word were baptized*; and *the three thousand souls*, who were added at this time, *continued stedfastly in the apostles doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*. This is in effect telling us *how many* were baptized, viz. about three thousand, *who continued stedfast, &c.*

Infants bear no part in this history of baptism; unless it be supposed that they are included in verse 39. *For the PROMISE is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

Upon this your Lordship will permit

me to make two or three very obvious remarks.

(1.) *The PROMISE is not baptism,* but expressed in the words immediately foregoing, viz. *Ye shall receive THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST:* a promise so remarkably fulfilled, as created astonishment in St. Peter's auditory; and to the accomplishment whereof he invites their attention in the following words, verses 16, 17, &c. *THIS is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel:—And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of MY SPIRIT upon all flesh, &c.* This promise, St. Peter tells his hearers, they saw fulfilled in him and his brethren, verse 33. For *Jesus being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received of the Father the PROMISE OF THE HOLY GHOST, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.*

(2.) *You and your children* is nothing more than *you and your POSTERITY*

[ΤΟΙΣ ΤΕΚΝΟΙΣ ΥΜΩΝ]. So in *John* viii. 39. *If ye were Abraham's CHILDREN* [ΤΕΚΝΑ] *ye would do the works, &c. Acts* xiii. 32, 33. *The promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same UNTO US THEIR CHILDREN* [ΤΕΚΝΟΙΣ]. *Matt.* xxvii. 25. *His blood be on us and on OUR CHILDREN* [ΤΕΚΝΑ ΗΜΩΝ]. An imprecation which has miraculously rested on them, and their *descendants*, for almost seventeen hundred years.

(3.) This *promise* takes place neither in *them* nor their *children*, nor the *Gentiles* (them that are afar off) but on *condition* of their *believing*, expressed in the text by — *as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

So that the word *children* here, has no reference to the infantile state; nor does the *promise* mean *baptism*. The learned Doctors, *Hammond* and *Whitby*, though they have both written in favour of in-

fant-baptism, conclude *this text* is nothing
 to the purpose. The words of the first
 are, “ If any have made use of that very
 “ *unconcludent* argument [*the promise is*
 “ *made to you, and to your childeen*] I
 “ have nothing to say in defence of them.
 “ I think the word *children* there, is
 “ really the *posterity* of the *Jews*, and
 “ not peculiarly their infant-children.”
Resol. 6 Qu. Edit. 12mo. P. 256. Sect.
 81. And *Whitby*, “ These words will
 “ not prove a right of *infants* to receive
 “ baptism: the *promise* mentioned here
 “ being that only of *the holy Ghost*, men-
 “ tioned verses 16, 17, 18. and so re-
 “ lating only to the times of the mi-
 “ raculous effusion of the holy Ghost,
 “ and to those persons who, by *age*,
 “ were made capable of those *extraordi-*
 “ *nary gifts.*” Annot. in *Acts* ii. 38, 39.

The next administration of baptism is
 in *Acts* viii. The success of the gospel
 at *Jerusalem* raised the envy and resent-
 ment of the unbelieving *Jews*; so that,

verse 1. *there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered abroad, &c.* Upon this dispersion, Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them; verse 5. *And when they BELIEVED Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN. Then Simon himself BELIEVED also, and — was baptized,* verses 12, 13.

Here likewise nothing is to be found but the baptism of professed *believers*. The history is so particular and exact, as to mention *men and women*: but there it stops. Had the sacred historian been a little more explicit, in a matter wherein your Lordship knows full well, and readily owns, we *can know nothing* but from *plain declaration*, and are least of all left to our own reasonings; had he, I say, been a little more explicit, and said, *men, women, and children*, if the fact were really so; it

would have prevented much doubt and controversy. But, as in this same chapter, when he relates *Saul's* committing *men and women* to prison, we naturally conclude, the persecutor's rage did not go so far as to imprison their *infants*; (at least there is nothing on which to rest a belief that he did) so from his stopping at *men and women* in his account of baptism, it seems, he could go no further, and says nothing of the baptism of their infants, because he knew nothing of it.

The writer of the *Acts* is careful to make express mention of *children* in an historical fact of much less consequence, when children were really part of the company. Thus *Acts* xxi. 5. *They all brought us on our way, WITH WIVES AND CHILDREN, till we were out of the city.* We may observe in another instance or two, how carefully the *scripture* mentions *children*, when they are parties concerned. *Matt.* xiv. 21. *They that had eaten were about five thousand men,*

beside WOMEN AND CHILDREN [$\piαιδων$, *little children*]. And in the next chapter, which records another miracle of the like sort, *Matt. xv. 38. They that did eat were four thousand men*, BESIDE WOMEN AND CHILDREN [$\piαιδων$, *little children, infants.*]

These miracles, of feeding so many thousand men, from such scanty provision, would have been sufficiently great and illustrious, without the additional circumstance of *women and children*: but as they were parties concerned, they are mentioned.

And is it not a little strange, my Lord, that we *no where* find *children* mentioned, not *once* mentioned, if it were the apostles custom to baptize *them* with their parents? These servants and apostles of Christ, we have already observed, were no strangers to baptism *before* the death of their master. They knew it, and practised it in *John's* time. But to *whom* did they admi-

nister it? To the *adult only*: not to them *and their infants*. If afterwards they were to understand and practise this rite so *differently* from what they had *just before* understood and practised; if they were to baptize, not only the professors of repentance and faith, but their offspring too; may we not expect to find such difference *expressed*, either in their Lord's commission, or in the authentic account of their *practice*, who baptized in obedience to his command? But if neither Christ nor his apostles have *declared* infant-baptism, how shall we know it to be their mind?

The next baptism is that of the eunuch, *Acts* viii. 36, 37, &c. who received it on this profession of faith — *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God*, verse 37. A noble monument of the simplicity of the first times! What a world of strife and mischief would have been prevented, if the church had never departed from it! As an eminent writer remarks; “It was

“ never well with the christian church,
 “ since it began to be a matter of so much
 “ subtilty and wit for a man to be a
 “ true christian.” The multitude of ar-
 ticles since invented, and framed by *art*
and man’s device, are, as one speaks,
 “ Cobwebs that intangle and catch harm-
 “ less flies, but the wasps break through.”
 They are only conscientious and thinking
 men, that is, men the most able and dis-
 posed to serve the cause of religion and
 virtue, that are, or *can be* incommoded
 and distressed by these things. Men of
 no thought, and of no conscience, or of
 flexible and pliant ones, will subscribe
 whatever the imposer shall please to en-
 join.

Acts ix. 18. relates the baptism of St.
Paul only. In the next chapter we have
 the baptism of *Cornelius* and his friends.
Cornelius is said to be *one that feared God,*
with all his house, ver. 2. The Jewish law
 so prohibited communication with the
 Gentiles, that St. *Peter*, the messenger of

God to the Centurion, had a particular revelation to remove his scruples; and to convince him, he might freely go unto the Gentiles. In expectation of this important visit from the apostle, *Cornelius* had called together his kinsmen and near friends, verse 24.

When *Peter* was come into the Centurion's house, he found *many that were come together*, verse 27. *Cornelius*, in behalf of these, and of himself, thus addresses the apostle, *Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God*, verse 33.

This assembly of *Gentiles* were so well disposed to receive the gospel, that, while *Peter* was speaking, the *Holy Ghost* fell on all that heard the word, verse 44. to the great surprize of the Jewish christians, who were astonished, as many as came with *Peter*, because that on the *Gentiles* also was poured out the gift of the *Holy Ghost*. For

they heard them speak with tongues, verses 45, 46.

When *Peter* saw this great effect on his audience, he said, *Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have RECEIVED THE HOLY GHOST, as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptizèd in the Name of the Lord.* Whom does he command to be baptized? All that *heard the word, and had received the Holy Ghost.*

I have been thus particular in noting the family and friends of this devout man, to see if there be any trace of infants having a part in this history.

But still we find not the most distant hint, much less, what your Lordship requires in a positive institution, *a plain and full declaration, that children are subjects admitted to christian baptism.*

I am, my Lord, &c.

H

LETTER

L E T T E R V I I I .

MY LORD,

I Have only one thing more to remark on the history of *Cornelius*. The people called *Quakers* are of opinion, that the baptism of *the Spirit* is the alone *christian baptism*, and the baptism of water belonged only to the dispensation of *John*. But in the case of *Cornelius* we have an instance under *the christian* dispensation, and upon the call of *the Gentiles* to the faith of the gospel; wherein it appears the apostle *Peter* is so far from concluding that the baptism of the *Spirit* renders that of *water* unnecessary, that he infers directly the contrary, *viz.* No man ought to be against their baptism in water, because they had, previously, received *the baptism of the Holy Ghost*. Their baptism with the Holy Ghost was the proof and

reason of their right to the baptism of water.

It remains to enquire, whether *the baptism of households*, mentioned in several passages of scripture, does not prove, or suppose the baptism of infants? We read, that *Lydia was baptized, AND HER HOUSEHOLD*, *Acts* xvi. 15.—that *the jailor was baptized, AND ALL HIS*, ver. 33. and that *Paul baptized THE HOUSEHOLD of Stephanas*, 1 Cor. i. 16.

Upon this your Lordship will please to indulge me these few plain observations.

(1.) It is certain the word *house*, or *household*, is often used where none are meant but such as are come to years of understanding. For example, *Luke* xi. 17. *A house divided against a house*, &c. *John* iv. 53. *Himself believed, AND HIS WHOLE HOUSE*. *Acts* ii. 36. *Let ALL THE HOUSE of Israel know assuredly, that God*

hath made that same Jesus, &c. Acts xviii. 8. Crispus—believed on the Lord, WITH ALL HIS HOUSE. Tit. i. 11. Deceivers, who subvert WHOLE HOUSES, teaching things they ought not. Consequently,

(2.) To infer it as fact, that infants were baptized, as being part of the house, is *supposing*, and taking for *granted*, not *proving* the matter in question.

(3.) Of the three examples of households baptized, it is expressly said of one, [the jailor's] *that Paul and Silas spake the word of the Lord to him, and TO ALL THAT WERE IN HIS HOUSE: and that he believed in God, WITH ALL HIS HOUSE, Acts xvi. 32, 34.*

If all the *families* in *Great Britain* were obliged to take an oath of allegiance; any man who should hereafter read our history, would make a very wrong inference, if he should, merely from the word *families*, or *households*, conclude,

this oath was administered to children; though they are very capable of the *outward and visible sign*, which is only *kissing the book*. “ I think it unreasonable, “ says Dr. *Hammond*, that the apostle’s “ bare mention of baptizing his *household*, “ 1 Cor. i. 16. should be thought competent to conclude, that *infants* were “ baptized by him, when it is uncertain, “ whether there were any such at all in “ his house.” *Resol. six Qu. P. 274. Edit. 12mo.*

Thus, wheresoever we meet with the sacrament of baptism, whether amongst *Jews* or *Gentiles*, whether administered by *John*, or the disciples of *Christ*; from the gospel of *Matthew*, where it first occurs, to the epistles of *St. Peter*, where we find it last, there is, from the beginning to the end, a *total profound silence* concerning the baptism of infants.

And can we, my Lord, bring substantial proof out of this *universal void*? Is

an entire perfect *silence* a sufficient *declaration* that our children are to receive this ordinance? I am entirely of your Lordship's opinion, " that this being a
 " positive institution, it must follow our
 " blessed Lord *declared* his mind about it
 " *fully and plainly.*"

I may venture to assure your Lordship, I have no *interest* to serve by retaining my present opinion: and it will give me a sincere pleasure to discover the *text* or *texts*, where it is declared this institution belongeth to children.

Whoever shall do the kind office to shew me from some *authentic declaration* of the New Testament, that infants were baptized, I promise him to be much more speedy in writing a retractation, than I have been to set down my reasons, at least what appear reasons to me, for differing in this point from the generality of my fellow-christians.

Does not the very last passage of the New Testament, which makes mention of baptism, *viz.* 1 Pet. iii. 21. require such a *condition* of its efficacy, as children are utterly incapable of? *The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us ; not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but THE ANSWER OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE TOWARDS GOD.* The infant, of a week, month, or year old, is merely passive, and might, where there is water enough for the purpose, have the filth of the flesh washed away; but what shall we say to *the answer of a good conscience?* without which qualification, St. Peter assures us, baptism is not saving. How shall we find a good conscience in a creature that is not yet a moral agent? that can do neither good nor evil?

The Catechism says, *There are two sacraments ordained by Christ in his church, as generally necessary to salvation, viz. Bap-*

tism and the Lord's Supper. Now because the New Testament is as silent on baptism, as the Lord's supper, for *children*; it may, I think, be fairly concluded, the want of baptism does not prejudice *their* salvation, any more than the want of the Lord's supper.

There was a time, your Lordship well knows, when it was the *general practice of the christian church* to give the Lord's supper to children; grounded on a mistake of that scripture, *Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.* The same notion of absolute and universal necessity, I suppose, led christians to baptize their children. No less a man than St. *Austin* taught, and strenuously maintained, that *infants unbaptized* were adjudged to *everlasting punishments*, Grot. in *Matt.* xix. 14.

Men's opinions of the *ritual* parts of religion soon began to run extravagantly

high *, and still do so, far beyond the simplicity of the gospel: as if there were in the things themselves, without respect to the moral and spiritual qualifications of the receiver, a certain inexplicable *charm*, to defend us from our ghostly enemy, and ascertain salvation. And this wrong notion, of the absolute necessity of ceremonial observances, has been a very powerful engine in the hands of men aiming at spiritual dominion, to enslave their neighbours minds and consciences. In popish countries, the character of a *priest* must be of the highest importance, when the people are taught, there is no possibility of going to heaven without the sacraments, and that *he* only is qualified to administer them.

I doubt, my Lord, we of the Prote-

* The *necessity of the Lord's Supper for infants* was taught by the consent of the eminent fathers of some ages, without any opposition from any of their contemporaries: and was delivered by them not as doctors, but as *witnesses*, not as their own opinion, but as *apostolic tradition*. Chilling. P. 152. Edit. 1.

stant religion are not quite clear in this matter; and that we view positive institutions in somewhat the same wrong light, when, on the child's illness, we are in the utmost hurry to send for *the minister*, and think the innocent babe suffers an irreparable loss, if it expire before it be christened. Is not this a stronger attachment to rites and ceremonies, and laying more stress upon them, than even *the Jews* themselves did? For, as they were not to circumcise their children till the *eighth day*, so I suppose they were in no pain for want of the ordinance to those who died under that age. Nay, as has been observed in the former letters; the rite was *intirely dropt*, and laid aside for no less than *forty years*, when, in the wilderness, the use of it became inconvenient.

I recollect on this occasion a remarkable passage concerning the learned Mr. *Dodwell*, as related by the worthy bishop

of *Winchester*, in his *memoirs* of *Dr. Clarke*.
 “ *Mr. Dodwell*, says his lordship, in or-
 “ der to exalt the powers and dignity of
 “ the *priesthood*, endeavoured to prove,
 “ that the doctrine of the soul’s *natural*
 “ *mortality*, was the true and original
 “ doctrine; and that immortality was
 “ only a *baptism* conferred upon the
 “ soul by the gift of God, through the
 “ hands of one sett of regular ordained
 “ clergy.”

Is there no appearance of a similar extravagance in their notion of baptism, who, in all haste, must have the minister, if the child happen to be ill, before the convenient time of its baptism comes? Doth not this create a strong suspicion, that the bulk of our people look upon *immortal happiness* as conferred in baptism, through the hands of the clergy; and imagine this immense privilege and blessing would otherwise be lost? *

* *Dr. William Wifhart*, late principal of the college of *Edinburgh*, laments the gross superstition into which

In the days when *infant-communion* was the universal practice, it would doubtless have been thought a great injury to deny children the communion of saints. But the church having been long persuaded that it has no scripture-foundation, has laid it aside, and would now be as much surprized to see infants brought to the communion, as she then would have been to see them excluded*.

The truth seems to be this: the *scripture* being as entirely silent on the *baptism* as the *communion* of infants; and the

the world is fallen concerning *baptism*, in the following words, “Is a new new-born child *weak*? — A minister must be got in all haste to perform a certain ceremony upon it, which they call *christening* it — the thing must be done—to save the infant from hell! Strange! that ever men under the advantages of the light of the gospel should here sink into *such* notions of God and religion!” See his Discourses on several Subjects. Printed for Millar, p. 59, 100.

* Our accounts of the *Greek Church* inform us they still give the Lord’s Supper to children.

personal qualifications of repentance, faith, and a good conscience being full as strongly, at least, required for baptism, as *self examination*, and other personal acts and qualities for the Lord's Supper, they have no concern in either of the two sacraments: nor ought it to be thought any more an injury, to withhold our children from baptism, than from the Lord's Supper.

And I think it no difficult task to prove, that every objection that lies against their being admitted to the *communion*, lies also against their being admitted to *baptism*.

I keep, my Lord, this one plain simple point in view; that positive institutions owing all their obligation to *express command*, and there being *no* command for the baptism, any more than the communion of infants, the New Testament intended neither of the sacraments for them.

The *catechism*, which is considered as

a plain summary of christian principles, teaches with no less evidence of truth, that of persons to be *baptized* is required *repentance*, whereby they forsake sin; and *faith*, whereby they stedfastly believe, &c. than it does on the other sacrament; that they who come to the *Lord's Supper* are required to *examine themselves*, &c. As to the promise of *sureties*, on which ground infants are baptized, might they not full as well be received to the *holy communion* upon the same foundation? May not sureties as well promise, they shall *examine themselves*, they shall stedfastly purpose, &c. as that they shall *repent*? The world is obliged to your Lordship for the following instruction; and I would to God we may learn it, *viz.* that nothing can remedy our mistakes on subjects of this nature, “ but persuading Christians “ to have recourse to *Jesus Christ*, and to “ those to whom he himself declared what “ his design was in this institution.” *Plain Account*, p. 6.

If then infants, for want of repentance and faith in themselves, be authorized to receive baptism on promise of their *sureties*, Christ or his apostles must have declared this. If they have, where is it? Is not the affair of sureties entirely a *supplement* of our own? But “ in the matter, my Lord, of an instituted duty, (or “ a duty made so by the positive will of “ any person) no one can be a judge “ but the *institutor* himself, of what he “ designed should be contained in it; and “ because, supposing him not to have “ spoken his mind plainly about it, it is “ impossible that any other person (to “ whom the *institutor* himself never revealed his design) should make up that “ defect: all that is added therefore to “ Christ’s institution, as a necessary part “ of it, ought to be esteemed only as “ the *invention* of those who add it: and “ the more there is added, (let it be done “ with never so much *solemnity*, and never “ so great pretences to *authority*) the less

“ there is remaining of the simplicity of
“ the *institution* as *Christ* himself left it.
“ I am the more solicitous to observe
“ this, and to *impress* it upon the minds
“ of *Christians*, because it is the *only thing*
“ that can either prevent or cure the *mi-*
“ *stakes* of many sincere Christians upon
“ this subject.” *Plain Account*, p. 5, 6.

I am,

my Lord, &c.

LETTER

L E T T E R IX.

My Lord,

THERE are sundry passages of scripture commonly thought to countenance infant baptism, which therefore must be considered. *Mark x. 13, &c. They brought YOUNG CHILDREN to Christ, that he should TOUCH them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. AND HE TOOK THEM UP IN HIS ARMS, PUT HIS HANDS UPON THEM, AND BLESSED THEM.* This historical fact we have in three of the

Evangelists. St. *Matthew* says, *Little children were brought to Christ, that he should PUT HIS HANDS ON THEM AND PRAY. Mark and Luke say, they were brought unto Christ that he should TOUCH THEM.* And what did Christ do unto these children? *He laid his hands on them, saith St. Matt. xix. 15. He took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them, saith St. Mark.*

There is no difficulty, my Lord, in these words. We are expressly told, the children were brought unto our Saviour, for the benefit of *his blessing and prayers*; attended with the usual ceremony of *imposition of hands*: for in this manner holy men were used to *bless, or pray for a blessing* on others. The custom is as ancient as the time of the patriarch *Jacob*; who called for *Joseph's* two sons *Manasseh* and *Ephraim*, that he might *bless* them, and he put his right hand upon *Ephraim's* head, and his left hand upon *Manasseh's*

head, and he said, *God bless the lads,*
Gen. xlviii.

Here is the very same transaction, as that we have under consideration: *Jacob* called for his grandchildren, that he might *bless* them, by imposition of hands and prayer. *Christ*, in like manner, called for the children, (whom his disciples would have sent away) that he might *bless* them, by *imposition of hands and prayer*.

Can your Lordship perceive any thing concerning the christian rite of *baptism* given to these children? Is it said they were brought for that purpose, or that *Christ* baptized them? No such thing; your Lordship will as soon find baptism given by *Jacob* to the lads whom he blessed, and prayed for; as in this history of the New Testament, of *Christ's* blessing and praying for the *children*.

No doubt, the prayers of pious persons may succeed for a blessing upon in-

infants, or others; and if the fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much, how much more the prayer of *Jesus Christ*! Let us follow him in *praying* for our children: but if we will *baptize* them too, Christ affords us no example of this in the passage under consideration.

But is not the *baptism of infants* implied in these following words? *Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*, John iii. 5. According to the original it is, except *any one* be born, &c. [ἐὰν μὴ τις]. If there be any proof here, it lies in the indefinite word [τις] *any one*: but this word occurring in passages without number, where infants cannot possibly be intended; no evidence arises merely from the use of it. A few examples will suffice out of this same Evangelist. St. John vii. 17. *If any man*, [τις, any one] *will do his will*, &c. ver. 37. *If any man* [τις, any one] *thirst, let him come to me*, &c. viii. 51. *If a man* [τις, any one] *keep my say-*

ing, &c. xi. 9, 10. *If any man* [τις, any one] *walk in the day, he stumbleth not*——
but if a man [τις, any one] *walk in the night, &c. xv. 6. If a man abide not in me* [εαν μη τις, except any one]. But it may be replied, the nature of the subjects here plainly guides us to *limit* the indeterminate words [*any one*] to such as are come to years of understanding. In like manner, I say, the whole doctrine of baptism guides us to limit these very *same words* to persons come to years of understanding. The mere word [τις] is too general and indefinite to prove any thing in this matter.

It may be further observed, that as christian baptism was not yet instituted; some good expositors understand this passage, viz. *born of water and the spirit*, not of *baptism*, but of the influences of the *spirit only*: except a man be born of *the cleansing spirit*. So Grotius, who says, here is the figure *ἐν διζ δυνει*. And Calvin,

one of the best expositors of his day, observes, “ to talk to *Nicodemus* of *baptism* “ would be premature: the design of “ Christ here is to exhort him to *regene-* “ *ration*, and newness of life.”

But if *baptism* be here intended, it is paraphrased with much good sense by Dr. *Clarke*, in the following words. “ I did “ not mean a new birth in *a natural*, but “ in *a moral* sense; that a man must be “ entirely changed from all the corrupt “ *opinions* he has before entertained; and “ from whatever *wicked practices* he has “ formerly been guilty of, and enter “ upon a perfectly new course of life: “ that he must be baptized into the “ profession of the true course of religion; “ and that, suitably to this obligation, he “ must be thoroughly purified from all “ worldly and carnal lusts, and must “ universally conform himself in mind “ and life to obey all the holy precepts “ of that religion, under the guidance “ and assistance of the *Divine Spirit*,

“ which God will be always ready to
 “ bestow on those who sincerely desire to
 “ obey his commandments. This, I say,
 “ is necessary in order to a man’s attain-
 “ ing eternal life; and without this, he
 “ can never enter into the kingdom of
 “ God.”

This was doctrine very necessary to
Nicodemus, a man of the Pharisees, who
 were infinitely scrupulous about *externals*,
 but great strangers to *inward*, substantial
 religion.

There are two other passages produced
 in proof of infant baptism. 1 Cor. vii. 14.
Else were your children unclean, but now
are they HOLY. Rom. xi. 16. *If the*
root be HOLY, so are the branches. I am
 very willing that children should be as
 holy as the most benevolent person can
 wish them. I have no manner of incli-
 nation to lay a stain on that *innocent* age,
 which our blessed Saviour was so remark-
 ably inclined to point out to us, as the

emblem and *sample* of that simplicity and purity necessary to all his disciples. But as here is not a word about their *baptism*, we still, my Lord, remain quite destitute of that *plain* and *full declaration*, which your Lordship requires for the support and warrant of a *positive institution*.

But no argument is received more readily than this: Baptism comes in the room of Circumcision: children were circumcised, and therefore are to be baptized. My Lord, I must beg leave to hold fast the sound words you have taught me. “ If “ this be so, Christ or his apostles have “ declared it.” And where is the passage of scripture, which instructs us that baptism comes in the room of circumcision? The New Testament speaks very copiously of circumcision as a rite *abolished*; the retention whereof, far from being serviceable, would be *mischievous*; therefore it was a happiness to *be free*

from it; but no where, that I can find, does the scripture say, or so much as hint, that baptism comes in its place.

In the apostles days, the christians converted from *Judaism* were exceedingly inclined and zealous to incorporate circumcision with christianity. Their zeal in this matter became very troublesome to the churches. What method do the apostles take to remedy this evil? Do they ever instruct them that they need not be so tenacious of one positive rite, since another was appointed in its stead; to be administered to the same persons of the same age? Such an observation would have been very much to the purpose; and the most likely that could be to give the judaizing christians satisfaction; and therefore, I suppose, the apostles would have taken this method, if the fact were really so, that baptism was substituted in the room of circumcision. But do they go this way to work? Nothing is

to be found of it in all their reasonings to dissuade christians from circumcision.

They warn christians that the zealots for circumcision were *subverters* of mens souls, *Acts* xv. 24. That circumcision availed *not* unto justification ; whether that rite be considered as derived from *Moses* or from *Abraham*, *Rom.* iv. But, *that if they were circumcised, Christ should profit them nothing*, *Gal.* v. 2.

This is the way they treat that Old-Testament rite : as a useless, burthensome, injurious ceremony. But they never go about to soften the *Jews*, by telling them that christianity has another rite *in its stead*. And yet this way of dealing with them is not more soft, than it was likely to have proved effectual ; if it were so, that baptism is the substitute of circumcision. Now because the apostles never talk in this strain, it seems natural to infer they never thought so.

I know but of one passage in 'all the New Testament, that has been offered in support of the opinion, that baptism comes in the place of circumcision, and that is, Coloss. ii. 11, 12. *In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ: buried with him in baptism, &c.*

For the right understanding of this passage, it will be needful to observe; that the *Colossians*, as other churches of the Gentiles, were in danger of being *seduced* to the observance of circumcision. To guard them against this danger, the apostle here tells them, they had received the *internal* and *spiritual* circumcision, made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh: consequently the literal circumcision was not necessary, and the judaizing christians troubled them with a groundless controversy.

St. Paul teaches the same doctrine in other places : thus, *Rom. ii. 28, 29.* *For he is not a Jew which is one OUTWARDLY; neither is that circumcision which is OUTWARD in the FLESH; but he is a Jew which is one INWARDLY; and CIRCUMCISION is that of the HEART, in the SPIRIT, not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

This *inward, spiritual* circumcision being alone to be regarded, he calls the *jewish* zealots *the Concision*, and says that we Christians are *the circumcision*, which worship God in the spirit, &c.

The apostle, in the place under consideration, doth not call this spiritual circumcision-*baptism*; but, being renewed in the spirit of their mind; having repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; in *consequence* of this, they were baptized. Thus they had *the*

outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual grace. In a word, the circumcision here spoken of cannot mean *baptism*, for it is expressly said to be made *without hands*; which is not true of baptism, any more than of the literal circumcision.

I am,

my Lord, &c.

LETTER

LETTER X.

MY LORD,

BAPTISM is not a deduction of reason but a plain *fact*, concerning which the acutest philosopher can know nothing more than any man of common sense. What the scripture testifies and declares concerning this fact, that is our rule, obvious to every attentive reader.

As in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the fact is, that Christ gave the *cup* to the disciples as well as the *bread*; and therefore the *Roman* church *erreth*, in withholding the cup from the people; and as it is an error to give the Lord's Supper to *infants*, because they are incapable of *remembering* Christ and *examining* themselves, both which the scripture requires relative to that ordinance; so in the sacrament of baptism, it should seem, that be-

cause the fact, as it stands in the New Testament, is *immersion*, it is an *error* to throw that aside, and put something else in the room of it; and because the fact as it stands in the New Testament is, that men *believed*, and were baptized in *consequence* and *testimony* of such belief; not vicarious, not another promising for them, the New Testament knows nothing of this, but their own proper personal belief; therefore it is an *error* to throw aside the administration of baptism to *believers*, and apply and confine it to an age entirely incapable of any rational act.

After the strictest search into the nature and design of this positive institution, it appears to me there is no positive proof that it was designed for children. And if it be allowed there is no positive evidence, it is, I think, allowing there is no proof at all: for nothing of a positive and ritual nature can be proved a duty, or a command of God, merely by our own *reasonings*, and by arguments drawn from

supposed *fitness*. If once we admit as *divine appointments*, practices grounded on our own notions of *fitness*, *expediency*, *usefulness*, &c. there is no knowing where to stop. At this rate a thousand ceremonies may be introduced into the church, though not one of them can stand the question, *Who hath required this at your hands?* *Isai. i. 12.*

I am sorry I am brought to a conclusion, in which so many are otherwise minded. And what parts us? It is this. They aim to prove a *positive command* by *inferences*: I think it necessary (in which I am honoured with your Lordship's suffrage) to look out for a plain declaration. By the force of inference, they set aside that maturity of age, and *self-dedication* to true religion, to which all the New Testament history of baptism confines it; and universally, (except in the case of proselytism) apply it to an age incapable of knowing the design of the solemnity, and of which the gospel is perfectly silent.

From examining the instructions of Jesus Christ, and his apostles, it appears to me, that the two positive institutions of the gospel should go hand in hand, and be received about the same time; and none baptized, 'till like St. *Peter's* audience, *they gladly receive the word*, and are qualified for christian *fellowship*, and *breaking of bread*, Acts ii. 41, 42. But, with most christians, these two ordinances are kept asunder, by the space of a great number of years.

Infants, say the writers for Pædo-baptism, were received into covenant under the Old Testament by Circumcision; therefore they must be received into the christian covenant by Baptism: else the Jewish children had a privilege beyond those of Christians.

And may not *infallibility*, that fundamental doctrine of the *Roman* church, be proved in the same manner? As thus:

The people of God under the Old Testament enjoyed the benefit of infallibility. The High Priest had the *Urim* and *Thummim*, by which the mind of God was known for certainty on great occasions. Consequently, there must be infallibility in the christian church: otherwise the less perfect dispensation of *Moses* will have a great privilege beyond the *christian*. And this infallibility is most evidently of the greatest service, to maintain unity and peace, so necessary to the stability and improvement of the church, and to prevent strife and contention, the root of confusion and every evil work. A privilege so obviously of the greatest use, and which the church had under the Old Testament, undoubtedly remains under the better and more glorious dispensation of Christ.

Thus the *Romanist*, in an affair whose nature admits of none but *positive* evidence, endeavours to make up the want of it by

inference, and reasoning from *fitness*. Such an institution there was under the Old Testament; therefore it remains under the New.

But, “ that our Saviour designed the
 “ bishop of *Rome* to this office [of infal-
 “ libility] and yet would not *say so*, nor
 “ cause it to be written, *so much as once*,
 “ by any of the evangelists and apostles,
 “ but leave it to be drawn out of uncer-
 “ tain principles, by thirteen or fourteen
 “ more uncertain consequences; he that
 “ can believe it, let him believe it.” *Chil-*
 “ *ling*. p. 61.

Whether, or how far this is applicable to the doctrine of *infant baptism*, which also our Saviour has not caused to be *written* by any of the evangelists and apostles, *so much as once*, your Lordship will judge.

If positive institutions may be proved

by mere *inference*, and the supposed *fitness of things*; may we not advance a step or two farther? Thus, At the *passover*, men, women, and *children* partook, *vide Exod. xii. 4.* and *Pat. Comment.* Since then *children* partook of the *passover*, they have a right to the Lord's Supper. The *passover* was an ordinance which particularly concerned *children*, commemorating salvation to all *the first-born of Israel*, when the first-born of the *Egyptians* were destroyed. But the salvation accomplished by *Jesus Christ* is of infinitely more importance than what the *passover* commemorated. Christ is the true *paschal lamb*, and expressly stiled *our passover sacrificed for us*. Shall children then be partakers of the *type*, and have no part in the great *antitype*? Were they allowed to partake of an institution which celebrated a bodily and temporal deliverance: and will it not be hard and unreasonable to exclude them from a service which commemorates the eternal salvation of the soul by the Son of

GOD? Had children a part in the *memorial* of *that blood*, which secured them from the destruction in *Egypt*: and must they be outcasts from the *Lord's Supper*, as if they had no part nor lot in *the blood of Christ*? How absurd were this! to allow them the *shadow*, and debar them the *substance*! to admit them to a *less* privilege, and shut them out from an *infinitely greater*!

Again: may we not *reason* out a right to positive institution, thus: God promised *Abraham*, *to be a God to him, and to HIS SEED after him*, Gen. xvii. 7. Of this promise and covenant circumcision was the token, ver. 10, 11. But surely the Almighty did not confine his promise and covenant to *the male-seed* of *Abraham*. The distinction of *sex* only, cannot make so vast a difference, that *the sons* of the patriarch were within the covenant, and *the daughters* out of it. Besides, this covenant with *Abraham* was the covenant of

Grace; that very covenant which contains the spiritual and eternal blessings of the *gospel*. Far be it from any one to think, that the *daughters* of *Abraham* were excluded such a covenant. Being then within the covenant, they have a right to an external sign and token of the covenant.

True, it is only said in express words, *Every MAN-CHILD among you shall be circumcised*. But certainly, *Abraham*, and the *Israelites*, were not such poor reasoners, that they could not infer, by *analogy*, the right of the *female*. *Abraham's daughters* must not be cast out of covenant: but to deny them an external sign would be an exclusion of them, and leaving them to the *uncovenanted* mercies of God.

I am aware, your Lordship will say; this is carrying analogy too far. Analogy will not suffice in support of duties that rest only on *plain declaration*.

I grant it. But, my Lord, is not this *the very reasoning* for infant-baptism, in default of positive command and evidence? and the reasoning on which *the greatest stress is laid?*

“ By *analogy*, saith Dr. Clarke, drawn
 “ from this rite of *circumcision*, it has,
 “ for very many ages, been the general
 “ practice in the Christian church to re-
 “ ceive infants by baptism into the obli-
 “ gations of faith and obedience to the
 “ gospel; and to make profession *for*
 “ them, what they are to believe and
 “ obey. [His next words are remark-
 “ able.] Whether this analogy be *rightly*
 “ drawn, or no; and be a *sufficient* and
 “ adequate foundation for what has been
 “ built upon it, is a *controversy*.” &c.
Serm. xxxviii. Vol. I. Edit. Fol. And a
 controversy, I think, it will always re-
 main, while the practice subsisteth, and
 we are blessed with the liberty of the *Bi-*
ble, by which to examine and judge of
 it.

I shall conclude with offering it to consideration, how widely our present administration of baptism differs from its first state. It was according to the gospel, *immersion*, and continued so, universally, for many ages ; but we have at last discovered the inconvenience of that, and altered it for *another rite*. Its original design was, that the persons baptized should therein testify for themselves, and as their personal act, their acknowledgment and belief of *Jesus Christ* to be the Messiah, and Son of God ; and their obligation and purpose of obedience to him. Their baptism, at the very time of receiving it, was a solemn declaration of their being *believers*, and of the obligation, they *knowingly* and of *choice*, took upon themselves, to *walk worthy of the Lord unto all-pleasing*. But now, instead of the person baptized chusing for himself, and promising for himself, he is a mere passive creature ; of an age that knows nothing ; incapable of choice ; but promises, by *proxy*, that he

will be, if he lives long enough, a good Christian.

Such is the change made in this sacrament: may I be permitted to ask, is it not a change *entire* and *total*, both as to the *rite* itself, and the *persons* to whom it is administered? an exclusion of the divine right of *immersion* and putting *another thing* in its stead? A preclusion of the *only persons* declared in scripture, viz. moral agents, persons able to consider and chuse and act for themselves, and confining it to an age, of which, with regard to this sacrament, the New Testament declareth not one single word: herein, I think, is verified the observation of that truly great man Archbishop Tillotson, mentioned at the beginning of these letters, viz. “ In process of time the
 “ best institutions are apt to *decline*, and
 “ by insensible degrees to *swerve* and de-
 “ part from the perfection of their *first*
 “ *state*, and therefore it is a good rule,

“ to preserve things from corruption and
“ degeneracy, *often to look back to the first*
“ *institution*, and by that to correct those
“ imperfections and errors, which will
“ almost unavoidably creep in with time.”

I am, my Lord,

With great deference

and esteem,

Your Lordship's

most humble Servant.







